JACK and I IN LOTUS LAND

By the author of
The Lady of the Decoration

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BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR OF
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THE LADY OF
THE DECORATION

THE LADY MARRIED

THE HOUSE OF
THE MISTY STAR

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JACK AND I IN LOTUS LAND

BY THE AUTHOR OF

THE LADY OF THE DECORATION

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Kentucky,
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Mate o' Mine:

Fly the flag of joy with me! We are going back to Lotus-Land, Jack and I. Last week his long-drawn-out war job with the Red Cross ended, and he almost took the breath out of my body by announcing that he was going to take a year's rest before he settled down to his regular practice again.

It is the first time in sixteen years that we have had a chance at a holiday either in single or double harness, and I don't suppose we should be going now if we were bent on laying up treasures on earth. Thank Heaven we are not, and I am the last person to string-halt a prospect by mentioning the most soul-blighting subject in the world.

Besides, I infinitely prefer being Jack's poor wife to being his rich widow. The terrible strain

of the hospital work in Europe during these last years has bent his shoulders, and put a nasty lot of little wrinkles between his eyes. The worst of it is he can't sleep. He thrashes around at night like a sea lion in a tank, and worries incessantly over the mess of things he has left on the other side of the Atlantic. You know the awful state of mind you get into when you get obsessed with the idea that it's you and not God who is responsible for the universe? Poor old Jack! He was, and is, and always will be a collector of responsibilities. I suppose that is the reason he married me!

Well, the long and short of it is that his fellow physicians took the matter in hand and bullied him into making this heroic resolve. The moment the matter was settled I began to pack our trunks for the Orient.

My one regret is in leaving you chained to your couch as you are for the next three months. But if I write you weekly bulletins and pour out everything that happens as I did in the old days perhaps I can carry you, at least in spirit, out

of the sick-room, and away with me to the far off corners of the world.

Japan! What memories it holds for me! It was there that I hit bottom, but thank God I bounced! It was there I grew a soul—not a prize specimen, just the common garden variety. It was there, best of all, that I won

"God out of knowledge, and good out of infinite pain,
And sight out of blindness, and purity out of a stain."

No one in the world knows better than you what it means to me to be going back. It's like playing a return honeymoon engagement with the same leading man. Thousands of little thankfuls are flying out of my heart in the direction all good little thankfuls should go, and in spirit I am already shoulder to shoulder with Jack on the prow of the steamer, chasing a sunset across the Pacific.

S.S. "Irotaki,"
Mid-Pacific,
November 1919.

Some days out and never a pen to paper! But how could I write, with the outside all shining with winter splendour, and the inside full of music and merriment? You wouldn't believe that old Father Time could turn such a backward somersault as he has! Jack and I have only been away from home for ten days, but we are already ten years younger.

If ever you get bitten by the idea that life is but a dreary tale, just ship aboard any old vessel for any old port, and you will change your mind. It is amazing the amount of comedy and tragedy that is let loose when human beings are cooped up together for some weeks with only a few boards between them and eternity, nothing more diverting on the horizon than a flying-fish.

Last Tuesday the snow-white "Irotaki" slid out from the pier at Seattle into the bluest of

waters, and hanging over her starboard rail were two passengers, outwardly shivering, but inwardly glowing, and so gloriously happy that if their cup of joy had brimmed over and drowned them neither of them would have been surprised !

(Mercy ! I hope you aren't afraid of Irish bulls ! That was a fierce one that just went by.)

As usual I have collected a group of intimate friends, and I blush to add they are all of the masculine persuasion. The more I am thrown with women the better I like men. I prefer poker to bridge, politics to gossip, and a fountain pen to a knitting needle. All of which I say with malice aforethought to the most " Understanding Feminine " in the world !

On the first day out I spied two young chaps in the dining-room and promptly marked them for my own. That night when Jack went to the smoking-room to cast his evening bet on the ship's run, I managed to corral my two youths in a corner by the fire. You know how you used to say that a stranger to me was like a corked

bottle and that I never was satisfied until I got the stopper out and sampled the contents? Well, age brings its privileges, and with a little adroit questioning I soon had them telling me the story of their lives.

The oldest one, Perry Bickford, did not have to tell me where he hailed from. The square cut of his jaw, and the granite grey of his eyes, to say nothing of his serious, detached manner, spelled New England. He told me that he had been in France for the past two years with the International Y.M.C.A., and that he was now being sent to Tokyo to take charge of an office there. He is evidently a fine young fellow, but when I talk to him I feel as if I were trying to melt an iceberg with a match.

The other boy was of quite a different type. His name is Austin Kentwood, and of all the handsome, debonair, graceful young Southerners that ever crossed my path, he heads the list! South Carolina gave him his drawl, but I think he must have drawn on all the States in the Union for his impudence! He has been con-

nected with several legations in the Orient, speaks several languages, seems to have plenty of money and no ambition. He served two years in the army, came out unscathed, and was now going back to the East with the vague notion of getting something to do after he got there.

Well, that first night I talked to the two boys I saw that it was no use trying to make the conversation general. The method you use with South Carolina isn't the one you use with Massachusetts! I soon saw that if I played up to the audacious young devil on my left, I was going to lose the respect of my serious-minded young friend on my right. So knowing full well that Austin was having his own fun behind my back, I resolutely turned it upon him, and devoted my attention to Son Bickford. I asked him if it was his first trip to the Orient, what his plans were, etc., etc. Then he turned on the same line of talk that all the other new-comers indulge in, about the iniquity of the heathen, and the unregenerate state of the Buddhists, and the imperative need for workers in the foreign

field. Now, I've pulled a few weeds out of that field myself, and for every bramble over there I can find you one at home. I am rather fed up on the people who, instead of twisting the tails on the devils in their native land, are for ever going to the other side of the world to chase the elusive heathen. I said as much to Mr. Bickford, and would have said more had I not felt the sofa shaking; then I looked sternly at young Kentwood, and said emphatically that I wasn't knocking on foreign missions, only standing up for home ones, and that I hoped the day would come when "Onward, Christian Soldiers," would be the anthem of the universe.

Another friend I have acquired is an old one of Jack's. Don't you remember his telling us about Burney Spencer, in the old college days? How he smashed records at the track meets, and got expelled every June, and taken on again every September? I imagine when it came to being one of the boys, Burney was twins!

Well, you can imagine Jack's surprise when he ran across Burney in the smoking-room, and

got the story of his life. They sat up almost all night talking, and since then Burney has scarcely been out of our sight.

You may remember the sensation that was caused when he ran away with Rose Bashford, and turned aristocratic old Mobile blue in the face. The "crêpe hangers" predicted the most awful results, but the match was a love one, and for ten years they were blissfully happy, with a lovely home, two charming little girls, and plenty of money. Then Rose died and the light went out for Burney. He began to drink again and was hitting the old trail, when his promises to Rose came back to him. Not trusting himself to face life in his old haunts and with his old companions without her, he resolutely packed up his two small girls and fled from all who knew him. His firm had an agency in China, and he applied for the position and got it. For all these years he has been living in Pekin, a highly respectable citizen, and he is on his way back now to join his girls, whom he adores.

When Jack finished telling me about Burney and his plucky struggle to live up to the ideals of his lost love, and play the double rôle of father and mother at the same time to his children, I had to do my face all over again for dinner.

Two days out from Yokohama.

Do you remember those long winter evenings at home when I used to tell you of the many times I'd sailed across the Pacific, with a heavenly blue sky above and a sea to match beneath? This time the above and below have been of another colour. The water has taken on the heavy grey of the clouds, and the one lively note in the dreary seascape has been our steamer. It has looped the loop and bumped the bumps, from Seattle to Yokohama! You can imagine my trying to pack under such conditions! Sometimes the trunk would be under the berth and sometimes I would. At present I am sitting on the floor in the midst of the mêlée

and my pencil is tangoing all over the paper, as you may observe.

A wireless has just come from my beloved friend Kate Jilson in Tokyo. She says she will come up to Yokohama to meet me, and maybe I won't be glad to see her! As you know, Kate occupies a place in my heart which is just a step lower than yours. You would not think my idea of a saint is a fat, fun-loving missionary, who runs a private reform school for girls, and looks after babies that nobody else wants. Jack says she is the only woman he knows who has an absolutely masculine view-point and yet retains her femininity.

At that moment an ambitious wave smashed across the open port-hole, drenching all my possessions. If you will retire into the silence, you may be able to hear clear across the ocean the wicked words to which I am giving unholy utterance!

Yokohama.

Here I am once again in the Land of Heart's Desire, and, like most earthly realizations of one's dreams, it's rather disillusioning.

Yesterday morning, with a bang we noisily crunched into a mud-coloured wharf. Maybe it was the shivering crowd, possibly the bitter wind which made a picture dreary and colourless. Whatever the cause, my anticipations and enthusiasm were fast accumulating icicles, when a part of a Japanese conversation drifted my way.

"So! You make convenient to arrive near last day of Goat Year! I congratulate. Him make many troubles for long time."

Instantly I was cheered. It is always a comfort to hold someone else responsible for misfortune, and I rejoiced to know that Billy's horns were numbered.

Of course I was prepared for changes. I suppose if Lucifer went back to heaven he

would find the clouds lined with fleece instead of silver, and the angels playing on saxaphones instead of harps. But honestly I didn't expect such a complete transformation.

The changes began to appear with the first glimpse of Hondo's misty shores. Even Fuji Yama was no exception. The mountain " where dwells the Spirit Lady who made the flowers to bloom " was as serene and beautiful as ever. But think of it! Over her glistening heights an airplane dipped and somersaulted, in saucy defiance of the traditions of the sacred mountain below.

Then we came into the harbour. No longer did sampans and white-sailed junks flock around us in the open sea, bidding us welcome, the owners inviting us to dispose of all small change for articles temptingly cheap and curious. Even the sea-gulls have flown to other climes, and only a Government launch, impertinent as to newness, important as to duty, comes and swiftly departs. After all, I've told you of the joyful arrival of a steamer in a Japanese port—

and now to see it robbed of so much of its colour and quaintness! It is enough to jar the feelings of the calmest Buddha. You can imagine what it did to a high-tension Westerner.

The little streets through which we rode to the hotel were as alley-like as ever, but instead of the gay paper umbrellas that I used to see, ugly black cotton ones, with wooden crook handles, were everywhere in evidence. Perry Bickford rode up in the automobile with us and I could see disappointment stamped on every feature. I kept telling him that this wasn't the real Japan and that he mustn't make up his mind about it from this dreary first impression, but all the time I knew I was talking to keep my own courage up.

Once inside the Grand Hotel, we began to cheer up. The warmth of the familiar lobby, the kindly, smiling service of its attendants, went a long way toward banishing the evil spirit of the goat and quickly dispelled all physical discomfort. True, the dispelling act commanded triple the price of former years—one yen barely

covering the doorman's tip, whereas I've often boasted to you that a little ten-sen silver piece produced as many smiles and bows as would an unexpected legacy.

You may remember that on the night a big steamer comes in the hotel gives a grand ball. Our little party turned out in full force, and I being the only lady to four cavaliers was easily the belle of the evening. I wouldn't even confess to Jack how stiff my muscles are from dancing. When I danced with him or Burney Spencer it was an old and gloriously familiar experience; but when I tried to follow the intricate steps and syncopations of Austin and Perry, it taxed my brains quite as much as my body.

So I gave Burney Spencer a special blessing when he led me to a cosy corner, sat down beside me, and began to talk. I was quite willing he should do it all. Between the strains of far-off music and Burney's quiet voice I soon drifted into the luxurious mood of a listener who hears little. I let my end of the conversation go at an occasional "yes," and

frequent nods. Old memories were fast weaving a spell about me. Or, maybe unusual exertion was taking its toll. I knew that Burney was telling me a long yarn about his domestic problems and that the names of "Hilda" and "Limmie" kept coming up. Once I almost dozed off and when I woke up Burney was saying in a most persuasive voice, "In case anything happens it will be a great relief if I can count on you."

"Of course you can," I said, determined that he shouldn't know I'd been napping.

"And it wouldn't be too much trouble?"

"Not a bit of it," I declared, groping in my mind for some clue to the situation.

Burney's eyes shone with gratitude.

"You are a trump!" he said. "The only woman I know that's good enough for Jack."

Jack came along just then asking for another dance, and I am still trying to piece out the story I failed to give attention to, wondering what Burney will do with those children, and

why his face wore such a look of relief as we left him?

Never have I seen a more brilliant assembly, nor one representing more nationalities, than the one in the hotel's big ball room.

Over the wide entrance door a Russian orchestra played. The melody flooded all space and smoothed out the crinkles in one's soul as only such music can—and there are some few million crinkles in this part of the world that need smoothing. Many of the musicians were refugees from a ruined land. Absence from home did not mar the beauty of their music, it only lent it a poignant quality that put us all into a deliciously sentimental and reminiscent mood.

A group of uniformed French aviators gave a dash of colour to the scene. And the stir they created, as they talked as vigorously with their hands as with their tongues, gave intense amusement to four English Tommies, each of whom had a leg or an arm missing.

Early in the evening Austin Kentwood fell a

victim to the charms of a most extraordinary person. She was said to belong to the brave Battalion of Death. It was not hard to believe. She was booted and bloused as a soldier of the late mighty Czar. There was no hint of colour in her handsome face, though she danced constantly, stopping only to change partners—and they were many—then swinging out again to the rhythm of the music as if marching to war.

It seems that she had escaped from Russia almost by a miracle, after the horrors of a German victory. Hiding by day, walking at night, living off any morsel of food she could pilfer, she finally struck a village by the sea. A Japanese freighter did the rest, and Yokohama was the port of safety.

Another striking figure was a stalwart Czech soldier with a string of decorations across his breast-bone. As many scars criss-crossed his face, and his right sleeve swung limp from the shoulder. But nothing prevented his feet from executing the most wonderful steps as he skilfully guided his partner with his one good arm.

Handicapped? Not a bit of it! When I asked about him I found that he had been a famous artist in his own country. When he found himself on a hospital ship in a Japanese harbour, maimed and penniless, he took a paint brush and a box of paints and went ashore, where he filled his empty pockets with pennies, and the hearts of the children with joy, by painting funny faces on wooden dolls with his left hand!

What amazes me most about the war wreckage is the unconquerable spirit that is to be found at every turn. It flames like a torch in the darkness!

After supper I was sitting out a dance with one of the hotel owners, a stately old Japanese who in the old days piloted me through many a bygone feast of curious customs and outlandish foods. He looked at me inquiringly.

"The war," he said; "have it turned all your people into hopping monkeys?"

I looked at a passing couple, jerking and twitching their angular way across the room, and I did not wonder at his comment.

This morning a messenger boy, who measured all of a yard in height, came to my room with a telegram. His English vocabulary was as limited as his height, but his spirit was one of accommodation.

He made a free offering of all his knowledge and gleefully assisted me in reading the message.

"Me know!" he burst out importantly, "Jil San! Her live by Tokyo. Boss Lady Mish. No can come."

Good guess! It was from Kate Jilson, saying she had been detained by illness in her household, but that we were to come to her at the earliest possible moment. I looked at the pink slip and sighed. In former days if Kate could not have met us she would have sent someone to represent her. Alas! Was Kitty, too, changing with the changing tide?

A new spirit seemed to envelop place and people. It seems to be mercilessly shuffling the quaint customs of the past into oblivion. The country has been racing along to progress

at such a giddy speed it has almost forgotten that the picturesque and the artistic were its two biggest offerings. Past masters as the Japanese are in adapting themselves to changes of time and circumstance—theirs or anybody's—isn't it a thousand pities they cannot make progress tally with beauty? That sounds as if I had a grievance. I have. But I am in a commercial port. And it's winter. The picture-book country is hid. Spring is coming! Something tells me a gracious spirit will open wide the drab covers and show me once again the Rainbow Land that is truly a gift of the gods.

The big-mail steamer that brought us over is out in the harbour. It is flying flags and frivolling with every wavelet and making much show while waiting to take my letter to you. Of course it may be waiting for other things. But it is queer what kindly intimacy you acquire with these giant ships which have carried you safely across leagues of water, rough and smooth. Why, I feel as if this one must know of my promise to write, and your promise to

seek entertainment only from the written pages. If cold facts creep in here and there, just remember they are facts, and each one has a godmother to stand sponsor for it.

I have just time to say good-bye and to pass on a hope that has been wished on me by the laundry man:

"May all pain be distant from important parts!

Yokohama.

Now what do you suppose has happened? The bottom has simply dropped out of everything, and I am still suspended in mid-air gasping with dismay!

Jack has sailed for Vladivostock! To be gone maybe one month, maybe two or three, and I am to mark time until he returns. It's the most utterly preposterous thing I ever knew, and I am as cross as forty million hornets stirred up with a stick.

Barely had we reached here and outlined our itinerary, than a letter came to Jack from the Red Cross that knocked our plans foolish. It was an urgent request that he would start at once for Siberia to take charge of one of the War Orphan Refugee Colonies on Russian Island and attend to the distribution of food and clothing that is arriving by ship loads from America and Japan.

When I read the letter I laughed and tossed

it lightly aside. Never a glimmer of an idea crossed my mind that my best half would permit anything to interfere with our long-deferred holiday plans. That is where I guessed wrong. One look at Jack's face and I knew he was going. For a second I was so astounded I could not speak, which is unusual, then I let loose with all the abuse and persuasion at my command.

You know what Jack has been through in the past four years and how much he needs a rest. It made me furious for them to call upon him to go to a part of Siberia which is nothing short of Hades, where they change their Government every week, and the cities are full of bandits and ruffians, and the unspeakable Reds kill a foreigner as they would a fly.

To all my protests, Jack answered: "Can't be a slacker, my dear. Duty is duty, and I am the one to go."

In vain I insisted that duty like charity begins at home, and that his first thought should be for his family (that same being Me). He just

looked at me with that patient paternal look that he has when I am erupting, and said:

"When you cool down a bit and think of all those children, half-starved and with no clothes to cover their shrunken bodies, and realize that I can be of real help to them, you'll feel differently."

Of course that put an end to any persuasions, and I said the rest I had to say to myself.

Jack lost no time in packing and starting forth, and here I am calmly laid on the shelf till called for. Did I say "calmly"? Cross it out. I am about as calm as a sea-gull in a fish net.

The worst of it is that everybody else has gone as well as Jack.

Burney Spencer, instead of playing around with us here until the next steamer, got a sudden attack of conscience, or maybe it was a cable, and went on to Shanghai with the "Irotaki." Reports of rough house in China made him nervous; Pekin and Canton are at each other's throats, and foreign meddlers are goading them on.

Austin, Perry and I went to Hatoba to see Burney off. When the gong sounded "visitors all ashore," Burney Spencer looked almost happy. The shock he gave me when he said good-bye threatens to lessen my term of years.

"Lady," he said, "you've lifted something like a ton off my heart. You were a brick to make me that promise."

"Promise?" I foolishly repeated. "When and where did I make you a promise?"

"At the dance. You said I might count on you to take care of my girls if I had to send them out of China."

I grew positively feeble, but Burney's pleading eyes were fastened on my face and I just wouldn't show the white feather. He hurriedly finished up:

"Please, Lady, don't let me down? If things get too thick you will help me out?"

It was a blow, but you'll agree, my old friend, that if flippancy is my camouflage, "A Slacker" will never be my epitaph. And mostly because a promise is a promise, and partly because

Burney's eyes are like an Airedale's I once loved, I said I would. But my heart hit my heels, and a wish went skywards right then that I'd never be called upon to live up to that promise.

It was a chastened lady that went down that wobbly old gang plank. My walk back to the hotel was not strewn with cherry blossoms. Austin Kentwood was hilarious over my predicament, and even Perry Bickford seemed to find some humour in it. But at least he had a little comfort to offer.

"Don't worry," he advised, "the chances are they will not come. If they do I am sure you are equal to it."

"Don't be too sure of anything in this world, Perry," I warned. "I couldn't raise a rooster, and as for mothering two children? Well! You'd just as well begin making a padded cell. If they come, that is where I'll end."

"Don't be down-hearted, Lady," advised Austin. "How do you know they are children? They might turn out two transcendent beauties right out of the Celestial City. Such things have been found in Pekin."

"No," persisted Bickford, "I'm sure they are just little girls who badly need mothering."

Then some imp of deviltry made Austin's face glow with mischief.

"Say, Bickford, tell you what I'll do: Bet you a pippin to a piccaninny one of Spencer's girls is quite grown and a beauty in the bargain?"

I looked at Perry. He flushed.

"I'm not a betting man, Kentwood, but for the luck of the Lady I'll take you up."

I laughed and wondered how Perry proposed to pay his debt with ten thousand miles between him and the place where piccaninnies grow.

Dismissing the boys at the entrance of the hotel, I made straight for the lounge. A butterfly girl in purple and pink served me tea, which I left untouched. I was disappointed, upset, with never a pin feather of poise fl ttering within. So I determined to have it out with myself. I did, and it was like an old-time battle. But it's a measly soul that balks at a conflict when passing pleasure is the goal. Then, too, out in the harbour, separated from the hotel only

by the width of the street, white-winged yachts and snowy sea-gulls contentedly drifted; sampans, skilfully guided, loaded with workmen happy at home-coming, raced toward the landing, and a great peace lay over the face of the blue waters. They were my allies. They had helped me before, and though it took time, they decided me now. I'll stick to my promise. I'll not tell Jack unless it is necessary, and you'll not hear another faintest echo of a whine from me.

Next week I'll go up to Tokyo and stay with Kate Jilson until called for. It's something of a shell shock to have one's long-cherished plans knocked over like a house of cards. I'm not loving Florence Nightingale to-night, nor am I yearning to be a Clara Barton. If they had never been born then Jack wouldn't be on his way to Siberia to-night. Perry Bickford wouldn't be a hopeless victim to duty and feel called upon to run off to Tokyo to-morrow. Excuse those blots. Tears and ink don't mix, and this is the swan song of my wails.

Later on.

I didn't go to bed, for just then somebody dropped down in the chair next mine, and a teasing voice said:

"Ha! Ha! Mamma San got lonesomes?"

It was Austin, and whatever he'd been doing, I'll swear it wasn't answering the call of duty. Yet I was glad enough to see him to have hugged him. There are times in life, Mate, when an absolutely *unmoral* human being, who hasn't even a speaking acquaintance with "the stern daughter of the Voice of God," is the greatest comfort imaginable.

"What you moping around here for?" he asked. "Why don't we do something? Go somewhere? Start something?"

"What can we do?" I asked feebly.

"Let's go to a picture show," said Austin, and before I knew it we were in an old-fashioned double jinrikisha gliding through narrow alley-like ways where big moon lanterns made fantastic shadows, and the queer little

tune of a bamboo flute mingled with the soft click, clack, of sandalled feet.

By the time we turned into the broad thoroughfare of Theatre Street my grievances were forgotten. It was no place to bring one's worries. Catch a Japanese bringing worry into Theatre Street! If he has one he lays it on a shelf at home, dons his best kimono, and goes forth to enjoy himself.

You cannot imagine the gaiety of the scene. One theatre after another, each trying to outshine the other, line the sidewalks, and up and down the street surges the pleasure-loving throng, easy-going, good-humoured, ready to laugh on the slightest provocation.

Well, it was a strange experience to me to enter a present-day theatre and to contrast it with the first theatre I ever attended in Japan, and it would be stranger still contrasted with the plays of old feudal days.

At that time patrons consisted mainly of the lowly mechanic, the despised merchant, and ladies whose names would never appear in *Who's Who*.

The Samurai, who were supposed to set the pace in the best circles, were so occupied in keeping perpetually ready to die a loyal death for their daimyo that their ideas of human enjoyment were too grim to include anything so trivial as a theatre. You see, polishing up their swords, with which they never parted even when making a visit to comrade, or nearest kinsman, took time and was more exciting. They might be called on to use them at any moment. Of course they had their relaxations —the awfully solemn, heavy-with-dignity variety, picnics, or any pastime other people might label pleasure, were known to the fighting men by a name only to be despised.

There is something to be said, too, on the side of the ready-to-die-in-a-minute gentlemen. However monstrous their code of living, they carried it out to the bitter end, sincerely and stoically.

To see old Japan pictured as a land of never-fading cherry blossoms, with gaily attired butterfly ladies and gallant Samurai tangoing on the greensward, played by a group of low-class

plebeians, might be a delightful illusion to the light-hearted. The serious-minded warriors, who were the real thing, could only look on it with intolerant disgust. So they stayed at home or went a-swording and cut the theatre off their visiting-list.

Not so the civilians, high or low. They made the most of the precious few pleasures in vogue or permissible at the time. As there were no parks, no museums, no libraries, no art galleries, the theatre had to be the thing. And the pleasure-seekers did not delay till afternoon or evening to begin their holiday, either.

Not at all. With the first crow of the household bantam the whole family—say of a merchant, wife, babies, grandfather, grandmother—would arise and begin preparations of food to take with them. They took plenty of time to put on all their best clothes too, paint and powder and perfume. Then, with a train of servants carrying baskets of eatables, comforts, fans, and most of the necessities of life, they started theatreward.

Once there, not for a moment would they think of buying one little row of seats. They bought one of the big squares into which the floor of the theatre was divided, like a giant chess-board. Father was generous, so he hustled the servants to spread the blankets and open the food-boxes. In came the family and the fun began. No hurry. It was usually an hour or two before the stage curtain was pulled aside. But there were next-door neighbours to gossip with and others to sip toasts with, so why worry about so small a thing as time?

When the drama began at last, it found almost everyone in the mellow state where the rankest play took on something of a beautiful romance. The party made merry till nine o'clock that night. When home was reached it had to be all talked over. One day's pleasure was lengthened into another.

Even in my early days—doesn't that sound matriarchal?—I have watched plays good and bad by the light of lanterns dim, and sat in the same kind of enclosure on my feet till

they were petrified and my body stiff with cold.

Now you can see the why of my enthusiasm of being ushered to a theatre, warm and well lighted, the second floor lined with cushioned chair seats for those who wished. The small girl usher, uniformed and with all her sweetest smiles, took the hint—no tips allowed—and placed us in full view of the audience below. It was divided in groups, each group in a square and each square covered with floor mats.

We were but two of a kind. The crowd was many of the same species. It proved as diverting as the screen picture. Class prejudice gave up the ghost when movies reeled in. Rich and poor, high and low, unquestioningly sit where their tickets say they must. From our perch it was like roosting in a high tree and looking down into a many-coloured flower-garden. Everybody was there who could get in. Fathers' and mothers' dark clothes were rimmed in by kimonos of many colours on the bodies of the young. The lights went down, the music began.

A professional story-teller stepped upon the stage. His the business of interpreting the picture, that the onlookers might not have to make a guess. The story lost nothing in the telling, for, if the professor did not know the story, he did know his audience, and, being an imaginative soul, recited the tale of the picture according to his own light.

Both Austin and I knew enough Japanese to get the drift of what he said. Had we understood all I doubt if we could have stood it!

The picture was a thriller. So was the hero. And when, after overcoming astounding difficulties, this one-time champion boxer easily disposed of twenty highwaymen, the applause that greeted his victory was an echo of the cheers he has heard many times in reality. Of course I cheered. Wasn't the picture American and the leading man too? And wasn't the orchestra playing "Aunt Dinah's Quilting Party?"

The unconquerable hero had been put to it for his life. He was trying to save it by swinging out on a flag-pole. The staff was giving way

under his weight. Death waited on the pavement thirty stories below. It was stopped by a cry from the audience :

" Wait ! Wait ! Give me a light ! "

Up flashed the lights. In rushed the ushers. What do you suppose ? A woman had lost her baby ! In her excitement she had let the child slip out of her lap and he had rolled down the slanting floor quite a distance away. The baby being found and securely tied to his mother's back, lights were lowered and the play went on.

The picture which followed told a story of love with all the trials attached. The audience got more mirth out of that picture than most Americans do out of pure comedy. The more touching the scene the greater the glee.

I must confess the tale seemed to me jerky and disconnected. I looked around to find Austin as hilarious as the rest. I asked for the joke. Here's the secret, which everybody knows and hugely enjoys :

The up and coming Far-Old-East still declines to recognize kissing as a symbol of love. There-

fore when a movie comes across the seas filled with kisses or embraces, the censor heartlessly nips them out. But does that careful censor consume them with fire that the morals of Japan may not be tainted? He does not. Neither does he believe in wasting good material. So he cuts them out of a public picture, pastes them together, and has accumulated some thousands of feet of film kisses of every style and period for private views only.

It was eleven o'clock when we started home, for we stopped at two tea houses on our way. We came by the canal road, and the dark, slow-moving waters flinging back their thousand dancing reflections of lanterns, bright banners, and pink-paper cherry blossoms, made a more entrancing moving picture than any seen on a man-made screen.

At the hotel door Austin bade me good-night.

"Oh, do come in," I said. "I want somebody to talk to."

"Secrets?" he said gaily.

With as stern a look as I could command

I replied that I did not tell secrets to babbling brooks or gay cavaliers.

"Whew!" he laughed, "what a corker! I deserved it. I'm a good guesser though. It's about those girls Spencer proposes to unload on you. Don't give them another thought, Lady! If they are good-looking I'll chaperon them for you."

"Indeed you will *not*," I said emphatically, with a mental reservation that if Austin came near any young girls in my charge I'd be decorating the near horizon.

"Well," he said, "I must be off, then."

"Where?" I asked.

"I'm going back to do it all over again. The night has just begun for the gay cavalier."

I stood on the hotel steps and waved him out of sight—that beautiful, good-for-nothing, irresistible Austin!

Tokyo,
Two days later.

Well, here I am at Kate's house, in a much more amiable frame of mind than when I left off. You are my blessed Safety Valve! With most people I have to keep all that steam in my head, and run the risk of spontaneous combustion, but with you I can just let it go whizz-bang! and have the comfort of knowing that you will smile and say, "There now, I know she feels better."

I came up here yesterday from Yokohama, and it was a full day I can assure you. In the old days a little toy train ambled its way along the ancient Tokaido high road into the great Eastern capital, arriving as it pleased, when it pleased, heedless alike of schedules and business engagements of its passengers.

This brilliant winter day I had been rushed through the tiled and concreted Cherry Tree Station, by an up-to-the-minute red cap, into a highly polished car which lacked neither bulb,

button, nor plush seat to make it the last thing in trolly fashion. And, take notice, the fashion does not stop at trollies. Tokyo's night sky blazes with signs, blue and red and orange, the character-writing freakish enough to make the lightning jealous. Electric hibachis for heating have relegated charcoal to the Dark Ages. The humblest rice shop sports an electric machine for polishing grain, and there are electric stoves to cook it on. Verily the old Samurai stronghold is being electrified, and we, who so well remember the quiet charm of the bygone lantern-jinrikisha days, receive the shock full abreast and feel a bit stunned.

But, on the trolly, time for emotion or memories was brief. The motorman was gleefully translating his high spirits into speed, and I was trying to hold on to my senses, a small suit-case, and a half-seat by the window.

There was just time for my eye to catch a glimpse of the curved sweep of temple roof, or the tiny, wayside shrines half hidden in pine-scented groves. Fallow rice-fields and winter

wheat seemed only patches of brown and green. I made a rough guess that the bright, shapeless spots on the dark dresses of the work-women were babies tied to Mamma San's back, and the streaks of colour flashing down the roadside were children at play. Just one swift glance at peerless Fuji purpling in the winter dusk, then, through crowded suburbs of straw and plaster, we landed at a brilliantly lighted station with a bump.

Hope the reading of it has not left you as breathless as the doing of it did me. I hustled to the platform and found myself enveloped in a fat and loving embrace.

Kate Jilson hasn't changed a whit in all these years. Neither has her hat. I veritably believe it is the same one she wore when I said good-bye to her! She is as gay and undaunted as though she hadn't been toiling for thirty-five years with Orientals, the godly, the would-be's, and the everlasting sinners. She simply radiated affection and hospitality, and between giving and taking news she announced:

" It's too late for supper at home. I am going to take you to the Bamboo Inn. Sorry I can't get a taxi."

Shades of emperors and daimyos! taxis in Tokyo—where thousands of the streets are too squeezed in to get a good breath!

" Can't we get jinrikishas? " I ventured.

" Jinrikishas! " Kate laughed. " Say, do you think we are standing still in this part of the world? There are only a few of them left in Tokyo, and we never use them if we can help ourselves. But we must hurry. We can't keep the *unagi meshi* (eels and rice) waiting."

" Are we going to walk? " I asked.

" Walk? Three miles, and supper waiting! Not on your sweet life. We'll take a street-car."

It would give you a week's vacation from some aches if only a Japanese street-car could pass your way. It is more like a bandbox on roller-skates than a conveyance for public service. Built for the accommodation of some fifty quietly disposed, unhurried people, twice that number of hustling would-be passengers make a

plunge for a particular car. The result is near a riot, all showing perfect good-nature and smiles, but making of the car an agitated human beehive with not enough space left on which a dragon-fly could comfortably light.

Into one of these heaving masses we pushed our way. Kate's polite request to make room went unheeded. The spirit of all was willing, but it was a case of sit in your neighbour's lap, stand on his toes, or hang in mid-air by a strap. Even the printed appeal not " to stick your knees or elbows out of the window " was useless. No other place left to put them. Happily everything ends somewhere.

How welcome was our halting-place at a street corner ! With the aid of a conductor, a polite motorman, and a spry youth we untangled ourselves, two dishevelled feast-makers. But I should like to see a prize-fighter emerge from a Tokyo street-car unmussed. Soon the cool air and a firm foundation beneath us began a cheering act. A near-by sign temptingly paved the way to hilarity. It read: " Amiable

dressmakers! Ladies having fits up-stairs. Arise."

The desire to take advantage of the invitation was almost irresistible. In steps my friend, bidding me repress my mirth. She reminded me we were in a section of the city which still clings to the feudal days, and which did not approve of ladies, young or old, laughing in the street.

Soon we were walking through Big Fist Street. A few good-sized hands could easily have spanned its width. Through narrow places, romantic with shadows from lanterns soft and swaying, it needed only the incense-laden breeze, the chanting of a temple priest, and the twang of a samisen! Lo! once again mine the joy to feel the magic spell!

By the time we passed the kitchen of the Bamboo Inn—Mate, wouldn't you love to have your kitchen where your big front door should be?—the feeling had me by the throat. When two little poster maids smilingly greeted us, removing our shoes at the same time, then

showed us to a room all silky mats and dim, pink lights, the haunting charm of the Orient had me fast. I'd love to coin a fresher phrase for you, but the old enchantment needs nothing new.

I think my "Thank Heaven!" must have been emphatic. Miss Jilson at once stopped preening her ruffled hat feathers and challenged, "For what?" I dearly love to catch a whiff of Kate's unconquerable good sense, leavened at times with a dash of frivolity. I baited her with a bit of sentiment.

"For one blessed glimpse of the old Japan I used to know, and for a friend that remains the same for ever and aye!"

"Nonsense! You can still find this sort of thing all over Japan, if you only knew where to look for it. Why, this room is good for another century yet, all except that Kakemona back of you. It's a bit faded, but I guess we would be too if we had been painted for more than three hundred years."

By this time the maids had served dinner,

and Kate invited me to draw up my small red lacquer table, and like Job of old to wail out my troubles and get it over with.

I didn't have to be urged. I told her what I thought of the Red Cross officials in America, of Jack for not making a protest, of my own unhappy lot at being left until called for at the very start of a long-dreamed-of honeymoon.

"Honeymoon? Fiddle-sticks!" she said unfeelingly; "you have had one more than I have as it is! Now you stop being sorry for yourself, and I promise to give you as good a time as you could have anywhere without that blessed husband of yours."

"But it's all so changed!" I wailed. "I don't find anything as it used to be."

"Of course you don't," said my hostess; "you didn't imagine that hideous war would leave this little empire a pet butterfly, while it was changing every other country into dragons and devils, did you?"

You can see for yourself when the Lady Mish gets going she cares no more for figures of

speech than any other kind of figure, her own included. The point is you always know what she means.

"And," she went on, "have you any conception what the people of and in Japan have done these last years? Red-Crossers have worked themselves into shadows. Stay-at-homes have made thousands of garments, packed and shipped them to Siberia. And the busiest housemothers baked bread and cake and sold them to swell the charity fund. Relief funds with fancy names, but a mighty firm purpose, have kept at it day and night, relieving starvation and incidentally pocket-books to do it with. Doesn't your imagination tell you, if your good sense doesn't, that hundreds of homeless Russian refugees and companies of Czech soldiers, with every coming ship unloading strays, prisoners, and stragglers, are enough to twist customs and traditions of any country fatally? Why, child"—that was nice of Kitty—"this is a brand-new Japan. Even our daily earthquakes have moved out to sea."

But talking of earthquakes reminded me of my own late private upheaval. Maybe I omitted some of the details, but in substance I told Kate of Burney Spencer, his girls, and my promise.

Kate's face grew almost beautiful as she listened.

"I hope they will come," she said.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because, when God gives women the task of mothering children, be sure there is a tremendous purpose back of it. Besides, you need it. Keep quiet. You think you know life, my dear? Well, let an old woman tell you, with all your struggles and small victories you haven't reached the middle of the Second Reader. You have been so everlastingly in love with Jack and life, you've made a little world of your own and put up a high fence around it, with never a kiddie of your own or anybody else's to care for. Now if these girls come I'll answer for it, they will make such a gap in that fence there'll be no use trying to put it up again.

How old are they and what are their names ? "

The truth had to come.

" I've forgotten ! Some outlandish names," I replied.

Kate rocked with laughter. " You remind me of a shy old bachelor I used to know. When he applied for a marriage licence he couldn't remember where the bride lived ! Come on, let's go home. I haven't had so much fun for five years ! "

I am writing this at night, and as I look up from my desk I can see the lighted walls of our near-by Japanese neighbour. A pale-yellow glow of shaded candles silhouettes the figure of a woman against the rice-paper screens. She bends with clasped hands over the form of a child, and the sound which drifts toward me through the darkness is not the cry of a far-off night bird. Being well up on shadows, I am here to prophesy this one is tagged with a story. When it is told I'll tell you.

I've counted up, or, rather, back. It is just

about time for your household to be gathered around for what you call your "best hour." How vividly the picture comes before me!

I can see you propped up on the couch before a blazing fire, reading aloud. Cousin Anne knitting away with her poor old twisted fingers, and Uncle Johnny whittling whistles for little Bob, who is building blocks on the floor. What a skipper you are to take on all that cargo of homeless relatives! One thing is sure! No matter how rough the voyage, you'll make the port of heaven at last.

Tokyo,
December 1919.

You would have a good laugh if you could see me this morning. I have bed socks over my pumps, a bath robe over my sweater, a steamer rug around my knees, and beside me is a little gas stove with a flame just the size of a match. But if I don't move I am fairly comfortable, and as I am too wrapped up to do much wriggling I get along very well.

Did I ever give you a recipe for a Japanese house? A tubful of plaster, a cartful of straw, some few beams, and a fishing-pole or so; a little time and skilful hands. Behold! a dwelling place where convenience does sacrifice at beauty's altar.

Kate's house is like this, and it faces a wonderful river, with a glint of the sea just beyond. It hangs as lightly over the bank as a kingfisher swings on a limb before he dives. There is nothing to prevent us from taking an

unexpected dive if the earth begins to shiver, but it hasn't happened yet.

We are just at the mouth of the Sumida river as it spreads into the ocean, and from my windows I can look down on all the fascinating river life. Two ferries cross at this point, and on rainy days, when the people carry red-, blue-, and orange-coloured paper umbrellas, the scene is for all the world like a Hokasai print. The boats unload thousands of tons of dried fish and other cargo, and then coal for the return trip. But it is not the big boats that I envy most. It is the little sampans where I can watch the Japanese women conducting their household affairs with no regard whatever for public opinion. The babies learn to walk on the rim of the boats, and it is rumoured that big bottles are tied to them so that when they fall in the water they can be promptly located.

This morning everything is covered with snow. The little houses across the river are shapeless white heaps, and the sail boats slipping out to sea with the tide look like lovely ghosts

of themselves. Never before did I know how many shapes sails can have. By the time I leave this room I will be a connoisseur on fashions in canvas.

This is the third time in a month that we have had a big snowstorm. To add to the discomfort of this one, the street-car men have gone on a strike. The men do not strike as they do at home. They continue to work, but they run the cars as slowly as possible and find something the matter with the machinery about every two yards. Conductor and motorman get out and tinker and tinker until there are some twenty cars in line. They manage to delay traffic from two to three hours, and people walk in desperation. Really they are like a lot of bad children. They never get mad and quarrel—they simply dilly-dally the whole day through.

To add to the troubles of the Government, the last revolution in Siberia has sent thousands of refugees to Japan. They come with anything they happen to have on—or don't have on. A

woman told me she found a Russian woman roaming around Yokohama in a dazed condition, and she had on a suit of net underwear, a calico wrapper, and gorgeous diamond earrings! You never heard such tales as the Red Cross people tell who come from Vladivostock. They found one woman starving to death in an old shed. She was lying on some coarse sacks filled with straw, but she had on a silk nightgown, and gave every evidence of being a woman of wealth and refinement.

I have ambled on this far in my letter hoping that I would have firmness of mind enough not to tell you the disagreeable things that have been happening in our household since I last wrote. But a secret to me is something that's *got* to be shared. If I don't spill over on you, I will on somebody else, and you are by far the safest person I know.

You see Perry Bickford and Austin Kentwood both came to Tokyo about the time I did. Naturally they followed me out here to Kate's and got in the habit of dropping in pretty often.

Kate took an instantaneous liking to the irreproachable Perry. She saw that he met all the worth-while people up at the Y.M.C.A., got him pleasant and highly-respectable living-quarters, escorted him to several missionary meetings, and promptly adopted him as her pet religious lamb. But for my poor black sheep Austin she had, from the first, only frowns and disapproval. She is the only feminine person on the horizon who hasn't fallen for him. From the first I've been putty in his hands. When he looks down at me with those outrageously blue eyes, and says, " Mamma San, I'll be good ! " I just melt into forgiveness.

If only he hadn't made himself quite so much at home here in Kate's house ! When he found she did not like him he went on calmly eating her tiffins, filling her house with tobacco smoke, flirting with the girls down to the littlest baby, and generally demoralizing the household.

" I am afraid," I told him one day, " that Miss Jilson doesn't like you very much."

" She'll get over that," he answered brazenly.

" I haven't had a chance to make love to her yet."

In vain I explained to Kate that he was an overgrown boy, that he had been petted and spoiled at home, had free rein in Pekin, and that it was our duty to try to make a man of him.

" He is twenty-five," said Kate stoutly. " If he hasn't grown up by this time he never will. You may all go on spoiling him as much as you like, but he will not get any from me."

I've fought for that boy and trumped up every imaginable excuse for him, thinking maybe Kate, living on the topmost round of goodness, did not quite understand the ways of a handsome-go-lucky man of the world. Now, after what has happened, I feel like standing in the corner with my face to the wall.

One night, Kate being out on business that would keep her late, I helped the girls to bathe and put all the fat and happy babies to bed. Then the girls went to their evening tasks. Being early for me, the lure of a beautiful snowy night beckoned me for a stroll. Putting

on my coat, I started out. But reaching the door, something made me pause, and I looked back. Never will I forget the picture of that room. The girls in groups on the floor, some sewing, some knitting, and all as happy as doves in a nest. The light on their kimonos made little rainbows about them and their fingers flew over their work as they listened breathlessly to a hair-raising story one girl was telling. They were waifs collected from heaven knows where, but the love of one woman had made home for them, given them heart's ease, and set their sandalled feet on a straight but honest path.

I began to understand something of the spirit in which Kate treated me to that semi-lecture in the soft-lighted room of the Bamboo Inn.

As I closed the door I found myself wishing that every old dogma in the world had a Kate Jilson tied fast to it.

I walked along the river bank, watching the dancing streaks of light on the water, made by

the blazing braziers on hundreds of sampans. I sniffed the honeyed odours, that even in winter make one dream of spring, and I listened to the strange and baffling sounds that help to make a Japanese night a thing of mystery and romance to a foreigner.

I got so lonesome for Jack that I decided to drop in for a call on some friends of Kate's, and when I came out it was much later than I intended it to be.

I hurried home to find the peaceful household which I had left, in dire confusion. Some of the girls were peering anxiously out of the windows, some were in tears. The moment I walked in babel broke loose:

"Cho Cho San! Her run away!"

"He lifted her by the hand, and she come with him!"

"Cho Cho San *know* she do wrong."

"What will Jilson San do?"

Here I was in the midst of a distracted lot of girls and crying babies, and I hadn't the faintest idea what the trouble was about. By dint of

great firmness I stopped the noise, and managed to get the following story.

While Kate and I were away, Austin Kentwood had dropped in, and by dint of great persuasion had gotten Cho Cho San to go out with him for a walk. That doesn't sound very wicked, but it constitutes an act which in this part of the country is a grave misdemeanour. I was furious with Austin. That he, with his knowledge of the East, should snap his fingers in the face of tradition and take this girl away from my friend's house alone, at night, was more than I could stand.

Heavens! How I prayed that they would return before Kate did! Evidently that was not the night for my prayers to be answered. I sent the girls to bed, and if you want to know the pattern of every rug in that room, every shape of Kate's few ornaments, and the names of all her books, I'm an authority. I walked and I waited. Then at twelve in came Kate. She looked tired and the lines in her face seemed deeper and sadder. But the ever-

lasting fire in her eyes burned bright and the cheerful voice of her made my eyes smart with hot tears.

" Well, I made it if I did have to walk five miles ! Not a street-car running and every son of a jinrikisha man gone home. Can't blame them. Home ? " she said, looking around the cosy room. " Isn't it the blessedest thing to have a home and small comforts and peace ? Dear Lord, but I'm thankful for it all ! "

Then suddenly she caught sight of my face.

" What's up ? " she demanded. And I told her.

If ever you have seen a tigress when someone harms her young, you can imagine the way Kate looked. I think she would have called out the police force if Austin and Cho Cho San had not come in just then. Never have I heard anything so loud as the silence which followed their entrance. For a moment she stood looking at Austin until his face flushed and his eyes fell, then she took a step forward and put her arm around the trembling form of Cho Cho San.

"Mr. Kentwood," she said, "you know better than I do just how much you've got to be ashamed of. Whether you lack common sense, or decency, or both, I don't know. But one thing is certain. You have the freedom of my house no longer. So long as you live, never dare to pass my threshold again!"

And Austin, the gay, the debonair, the voluble, was for once abashed, and without so much as a glance at any of us he strode out of the house and banged the door behind him.

The incident has been hushed up, and we are praying that it was not as serious as it seemed at the time. But poor little Cho Cho San is like a flower with a broken stem, and, in spite of all we can do, the other girls treat her with mistrust.

Isn't it atrocious that even for a slight indiscretion it's the *girl* who pays?

Tokyo,
January 1st, 1920.

When this reaches you, New Year Day will have long since passed into that invisible haven of all other New Years. Bestir your fancy and watch something of the day's pictures I will try to pen for you. Make them fast in your memory before their quaint beauty becomes dulled by onrushing time.

Of all the holidays in the Land of the Rising Sun, the first day of the year is the biggest and gladdest.

When I hurried down to breakfast this morning I found the dining-room an animated flower-garden. All Kate's pupils, dependents and neighbours, dressed in their brightest and best, were assembled with congratulations and small gifts to bestow. The day is full of luck, too—good or bad. Depends upon how one greets it. And you can wager your last penny, my dear, no rich man, poor man, merchant, or chief,

wise or otherwise, is bold enough to disdain entirely the day's traditions which started the minute the first Japanese Adam and Eve appeared on Izumo's rocky shores. Traditions may lie dormant for all the year, but with the dawn of a fresh one they sally forth to frolic in the highways and the alleys, indoors and out. They demand respectful attention from every being, and woe to him or her who tips the nose in scorn.

You may think a policeman immune. He isn't. I can prove it. A few nights ago, as we were coming home, Katherine picked up from the dusty street a small coin. It was a find because it was silver. Probably when I tell you that all the silver small change is completely and mysteriously melting from sight in this part of the world, you will understand why we were so fluttered over the discovery. Our excitement led us to the nearest police-box. We handed the precious bit to the one lone guardian of the law on watch. With it we were obliged to hand in our life-histories and present address.

On New Year's morning our first honourable

visitor was the Keeper of the Coin! He brought all his dignity and his calling card. I envied the calm leisure with which he removed his belt and his fierce little sword. Without a flicker he put his gloves into his hat, then treated us to half a volume of congratulations. He did it all as solemnly as if he were reading a list of our sins with penalties attached. When he thrust his hand in his pocket we began to wonder if an arrest warrant would follow. Instead he only produced the silver piece, saying it had not been called for. Would Kate use it as a good-luck piece? In a twinkle the whole amount of five cents went clinking into the charity box. The visitor saw for himself that it had started on its mission. The police smiled for the first time, and I am sure for the millionth time the God of Luck grinned.

The latter gentleman must have been particularly pleased with us too. He smiled on us all day. Presents began pouring in from every direction—baskets of oranges, boxes of persimmons, cake, rice, and blessed fowls of old

Nippon! Dozens of eggs! No sooner had these gifts landed at the front door than out they went through the back entrance to neighbours old and penniless, whose only hope for the next meal lay in Kate's caring for them as she would for a flock of helpless children. All the givers well knew what was done with their gifts. Knowing this, they heaped up the measure, not alone as a tribute to the deity of the day, but from a kind and generous spirit all their own.

In our house every soul was commandeered to lend a helping hand in receiving visitors and portioning out the gifts. By late afternoon, so constantly had I gone the rounds, that I was beginning to sympathize with the wheels of a Christmas delivery-wagon, when boom went a temple bell. All was changed. Work was done. Play began.

The sun tumbled behind the golden mountains; and as the world lay enthralled in the afterglow of pink and purple, I caught a glimpse through my windows of the Shadow Lady next door. She was seated under a great pine tree

in the garden. The lovely tints in her kimono lighted up the sombreness of the old tree as much as did the sunset. But the sadness on her face belonged neither to the dress nor to the shining hour. I softly closed my screen, slid down our ladder-like stairs, and commanded Kate to produce all the information she had on the picture lady next door.

" Yes, I know her," said my friend. " She's the unceremonial wife of a ' jingling-with-money ' broker. The man was so pleased with his sudden riches—I don't know how he got them—he just had to make himself a present. He picked her—without her leave, of course. Simply handed papa a bank roll and the thing was done."

You should see the Lady Mish's eyes blaze when she mentions this subject.

" Think of a country which has grown upward by leaps and bounds retaining this abominable law that permits a man to keep extra households. Of course anybody who knows the Orient knows that Japan is far from being alone in her guilt,

but . . ." Kate preached a ten-minute sermon with appropriate texts. I voted yes to everything she said, but I couldn't change the law and said as much. What I wanted was the story. By snatches I got it.

The woman, Otani San by name, had been like a frightened bird in a golden cage. In vain Kate had tried to make friends with her. It was not until after her baby came, about three months ago, that she began to slip through the hedge that divides our gardens, and watch the children playing in the kindergarten yard. Gradually their Christmas songs sang into her lonely heart something she had never known; the stories told by the teachers opened the windows of her soul. With great fear and hesitation she came at last to Kate and poured out her story. She said that when her father, who was poor, commanded her to go to live with the broker man, who was rich, she went without question. She had never disobeyed him, and she felt she was doing the right thing in helping her family. But now that she knew the sin she

was committing, she could go on no longer. "Him have real wife, four children. Me and my baby san no belong him." So she described the situation, and she added with passionate earnestness "by and by me flying away for ever and ever."

Kate urged her to stay where she was until the baby was a little older. It was hard enough for an unhampered woman to get work, and the prospects were not promising for one with a baby strapped to her back. So poor Otani San, surrounded with luxury, and provided with every comfort, was impatiently waiting for the time when she could go forth into the world to make her meagre but honest livelihood.

By the time Kate got through telling me this story, Perry Bickford had come in, and we made him stay to supper and go with us on our almsgiving pilgrimage. Really Perry *is* a satisfaction after that scallawag Austin. He is one of those utterly dependable persons, who is never late, who never breaks an engagement, who always does the right thing at the right time.

And yet I know, down in the degenerate heart of me, I would willingly have exchanged him to-night for that graceless Austin, with his irresponsible laughter, his naughty little side-remarks, and his outrageous bravado. Perhaps Kate's championship of the immaculate Perry and the sound of his praises being sung in my ears all day have something to do with it.

At any rate, we three started out to see the sights, and found the whole of Tokyo bursting forth in a blaze of welcome to the first night of the year. Countless coloured lights had turned even the sordid spots of the great city into a dreamland.

Before every door, rich or poor, swayed a flourishing bamboo tree, its feathery branches all aflame with myriad strips of coloured paper. Every tree on one side of the street bent gracefully to meet its neighbour on the other side. Beneath the enchanted bower walked countless holiday-makers who happily could forget for the moment they were but mortal.

You should see the big lobster as he hangs

over many carved entrance gates. He is all tangled up in a wonderful bow-knot of straw rope. He is there to wish long life to every passer-by, and his paper sides are pink with blushes as he looks down on a printed slip swinging from the lower limbs of two fresh young pine trees, shaved in order and placed on each side of the gate. Hearken to what that printed slip says, Mate: "Another milestone on the road to Hades." What a cheerful soul it must have been to have thought of it first! After all, it isn't as doleful as it sounds. It is only a reminder that if you are on the wrong path there's still time to turn and go the other way.

We were headed the right way and soon swung into the silver-light street called Ginza. On unfestival days the Ginza is the Fifth Avenue of Tokyo, with ample space, semaphores, sky-scrapers, and all the trimmings that go with them. How glad I was, that night, that most things new and aggressive had the good sense to hide in the soft glow of numberless lanterns! Big ones and little ones, rivalling in hue the

gay clothes of the glad throng. And over all the magic touch of promise and hope which comes from the dawn of every New Year.

Yes, I know you. It is the children you want to know about. They were there, thousands of them, rich and poor, but all sweet and fresh as the blossoms of plum tree and cherry on the flower-man's stand. Many little brothers and sisters with littler brothers and sisters strapped to their backs, and so joyously light-hearted that I found myself wishing they had never to grow up to find their Land of Enchantment filled with shadows of reality.

Happily, the shadows were afar off, and the children danced from place to place like light-winged moths in a full-bloomed garden. Balls of silver bobbed in their black hair, pink and yellow balloons fluttered in their hands as they fled from one joy to another. Truly the gladness of the crowds of many colours, the keen delight in simple things, the cheerful pushing and jostling, always with smiles and more smiles, made a sight to gladden this sad old world.

It mattered neither to young nor old that poverty and riches stared at each other with only the width of the pavement between. On one side gleamed the plate-glass windows filled with Oriental treasures. Crêpes of wonderful rainbow tints, cobwebby enough to catch the wisest fly, sashes so heavily woven with gold that I am thinking the strongest back would have need of a crutch to support its weight. Doesn't it make you tired even to think of five yards of brocade heavy with tinsel, and all of a yard wide, wrapped around the middle, tied over a pillow in the back to give them the proper shape? No wonder that ladies of the smartest set receive their guests while sitting on the floor.

But it was the outer side of the pavement that gripped the emotions. It was fringed with the poor and the very poor, their meagre wares spread out on squares of matting laid flat on the flagging, their owners eager and wistful, but thankful for the smallest sale. Kate said these people came for this special night from all the out-of-the-way, nearly forgotten spots

of Tokyo. They brought all their own possessions and any they could borrow, with the hope that Good Luck would bring them a few extra pennies.

Don't you think it the act of a kindly Government to make it possible for these poverty-stricken ones to have the same chance as the prosperous ones at the biggest time of the years? I do, but—shades of Shoguns! What stories those little pavement shops revealed! Tragedy and mirth as intermixed as bamboo fountain-pens and yellowed carvings of ivory.

I wondered what trick of fate sent those lacquer boxes with the crest of a proud and ancient dynasty embedded in gold to a side-walk sale? Where was the deserted temple, once owner of the rich tapestries and priestly garments now tagged with a marked-down price? Was it a lover who penned the poem on the face of the dusty fan? But, goodness me! why shade the picture with melancholy musings? Let us laugh instead with a trader who turned his sense of humour into profit.

Hear what I read from a board which topped a pile of bunnies tanned and ready to wear.

"Ladies' furs. Made from your skins or mine."

The sparkle in the owner's eyes made me suspicious. I asked, "You know?"

"Oh, yes! I live in Chicago fifteen year."

Good English and the wit to use it. I might have learned much from this merry merchant, but a cry diverted me.

It was young and determined. I turned to see youthful Japan, at least a vigorous part of it, protesting against the innovation of a baby-buggy. Mamma San's back was good enough for him. I followed to see the end of the argument. Of course it ended in victory for son and a heartache and backache for mother. She evidently had spent her little all for the cheap go-cart which might help to ease the burden of carrying the boy, and alas! he would have none of it!

The fund you gave me did glorious deeds that night. It helped to fill the despised cart with

joy for the child and comfort for the mother, as it helped, later on, to fill many other little hearts with rapture.

Here's where I must give Perry his due. He worked like a Trojan, carrying out Kate's suggestions with a dispatch and efficiency that were amazing. While not speaking a word of Japanese, he seemed to be able to understand all those kiddies and their demands. Once he dug a poor old couple out of a doorway, and took them into a little restaurant. They were pitifully shabby and very cold, but when they saw their steaming bowls of rice and fish, they became smiling and voluble. They said they knew the God of Luck would not pass them by on that night, if they waited long enough ; and then with a smiling nod at Perry, the old man added, " He come ! "

After we had dispensed our alms, we gave ourselves over to sight-seeing.

Out in the street, men, women, and children played battledore and shuttlecock. They seldom missed a stroke, while they skilfully eluded street

traffic. Motor-buses raced up and down. Long processions of luxurious automobiles with more luxurious womankind within went this way and that. Side by side sped jinrikishas conveying gorgeous geisha maids to the next engagement. But not for a moment are you to think the tea-house ladies ever choose the lowly jinrikishas. Indeed, no! Rarely do they budge from their silken cushions these days unless assured that a motor waits at the garden gate.

A band of street singers, picturesquely ragged, chanted a forty-fourth verse for me for half a penny. For ten cents a baby acrobat stood on his head and gaily tossed a ball from two small feet. My two good-sized ones were giving out. I said, "Home, Kate." Weary, but happy, we faced about, stopping only to help out an over-wrought lady who was singing for her supper.

There were joyous sounds from the house across our garden. Hilarious encores for the singing girls and their tinkling samisens told the story. Otani San's room was dark. I can hardly hold my curiosity to know if she has

fled, and what will happen when she does! On the street the moon played hide-and-seek with the shadows. Two lovery young things walked arm-in-arm and chanted an ancient love-song. Certainly it was against the rule. But, as I told you, times are swiftly changing. Love's young dream is heading the procession.

In the great world shuffle even the "Passionless calm of the East" is being ruffled. Who can say how long the beauty of Nippon's gladsome New Year will remain untouched? Never mind! My pictures and yours will last as long as we do.

Tokyo,

January 15.

It's a happy relief after all the New Year junketing to settle down into the peace and quiet of this uneventful life. It gives me time to mend my clothes and write my letters and do some long-desired reading.

I have never laid eyes on Austin Kentwood since that wretched night I wrote you of. Once I thought I caught a glimpse of him at a reception at the American Embassy, but I went in another direction as fast as I could.

So far as this house is concerned he might as well be dead. Kate never mentions him to me, and I ask no questions. Cho Cho San is shunned by her companions as if she had committed a mortal sin, but whether it is guilt or abused innocence that is causing her to droop over her work I cannot say. I have asked her to be my

special maid, and I hope that will reinstate her in the family.

The drama next door has reached a climax. Yesterday the broker came rushing in, wild-eyed and excited, to tell Kate that Otani San had left him. In his hand he held a note, thanking him politely for his past kindnesses, and ending: "Do not look for me. I shall never return."

The man implored Kate to help him find her. He wanted to recover his lost property, he wanted to regain his lost authority. Kate stood firm for Otani's right to decide the matter for herself. It was a battle royal between a sure saint and a determined sinner, and the saint was victorious. A compromise was reached when Kate agreed, if he would not pursue the fugitive, that she would try to find her and deliver a message from him. This was to the effect that if she returned he would double her annual allowance, give the child his name, and provide them with every luxury.

Kate shook her head.

"I'll take the message," she said grimly,

" but she will not come. And the day is past when you can make her do so."

Do you think I am making too much of this? Not a bit of it. It's a sign of the times. A few years ago the thing simply could not have happened. And even now there are those who contend that, though the way be open for escape, the desire for a luxurious life is stronger than desire for the straight and thorny path of hard work and poverty. Time and Katherine will tell this story.

While Kate was gone on her search for a runaway lady, your fat, newsy letter came. Still at it, I see! Keeping your little-big world astir with enthusiasm, polishing up jaded people and weary hearts with your clear vision and kindly deeds!

Of course you didn't say so, but I have an enthusiasm or so myself. The two biggest ones in my treasure-box are you as a miracle-worker in turning handicaps into victory for yourself and others, and Katherine Jilson's fearlessness in tackling the devil in any disguise.

Every time she does it you can fairly see the crumpled horns and drooping tail of the personage in question, and you want to race to life's score-board, wherever that may be, and hang up a double number for Kit.

Later.

This morning, just after I finished the above, I heard a commotion downstairs, and when I arrived on the scene I found Perry Bickford in the midst of an excited group holding a baby in his arms. He was coming in to lunch when he stumbled over a basket just inside the gate; a queer little noise made him curious, and he lifted the cloth and found a baby.

Now, stray babies are no novelty in Kate's life. Only too often, when food gives out, some poor mother brings her baby to Kate to keep it from starving, or some girl in disgrace leaves the pitiful evidence of her shame on Kate's hospitable doorstep. At such times Kate wastes no time in speculation; she promptly makes a bonfire of baby's clothes, scrubs it clean, and wraps it in fresh clothes.

But this case was different; the tiny scrap of humanity in Perry's arms was obviously an aristocrat. Its rose-petal skin and dainty clothes made Kate give one sniff of surprise, then snatch it into her arms and hurry into the house.

"It's Otani San's baby!" she whispered to me in tense excitement. "Get me a coarse gown, and a pair of shears: I've got to make a little peasant of her."

In a jiffy the silken clothes were whisked off, the little bobbing head was bald, and a far more doting parent than the broker man would have had difficulty in recognizing his offspring.

To-night after supper we had a regular celebration. The baby in its straw basket lay before the fire waving her heels at the blaze, and cooing to a red-paper butterfly on the wall as intimately as if she had just flown in from Butterfly Land herself. The rest of us sat around in an admiring circle, Kate and I in rocking chairs and the little maids on the floor in a giggling ring, while Perry, feeling very proud of his find, occupied the sofa.

After he left we told stories and played games, and Kate was the ring-leader in all the fun. I never saw her so gay.

Her little house is nothing more than a dab of paper and plaster, yet everything that comes into it seems to give strength of flesh and spirit. I looked at those six girls, snatched from the lowest dives, who under Kate's big, capable hands were being moulded into fine, efficient women. I looked at the scrap of a baby to whom she was being a temporary mother; at Perry who in his first days of homesickness and discouragement was finding a tower of strength in her gay common sense and big-heartedness. Then I thought of a very silly, worldly little Lady, who had come to her in a rebellious, selfish, egotistical mood, and had lived to see the error of her ways and repent her folly.

I feel so noble and "lit up" to-night, that I am not going to complain if Jack has to stay in Siberia another month!

As I look out of my window, my eye falls on a big new sign in the Broker Man's window.

"For Rent," it says, but it really spells failure for the owner and victory for Otani San.

After seeking her in every tea house and even in the Yoshiwara, he has at last given up. He came over last night and caught Kate with his own baby in her arms and never recognised it. He said Otani was an ungrateful, unfaithful, disobedient girl, and that she could not come back now if she wanted to. To all of which Kate gravely listened, and assured him that he was doing the right thing in leaving her to her fate. What that fate is we do not know, for never has she given us the slightest hint of her whereabouts.

We are all astir over the landing of some hundreds of Russians fleeing from the Reds at Vladivostock. They came in seized ships when the Bolsheviks took the city, and are now in the harbours of Moji and Tsuruga, being furnished with food and coal by the Japanese Government. It's a terrible question what to do with these refugees. They cannot return to Siberia, yet Japan, with all the goodwill and generosity in

the world, cannot take care of them permanently. Those who are sufficiently educated are to be allowed to go to the Philippines, and some, I hear, will go to Brazil to help in agricultural work.

I should be dreadfully anxious about the state of affairs in Vladivostock, did I not get letters regularly from Jack, saying that he is in absolutely *no* danger. I know he would not deceive me, but just the same I wish he were out of it all.

I wish I could send his letters to you, but after sixteen years he still writes love letters that can't be shared with anyone.

I blush with remorse when I think of the way I behaved about his going to Siberia. He has been able to do such marvellous work out there, and it doesn't seem to be hurting him in the least. In his last letter he says:

"Maybe you think you have seen sad sights, but you'd have to come to Siberia to see the depths of human woe, and that in the faces of little children!

"A year ago, when things were at their

worst in Petrograd, hundreds of frenzied parents, fearing their children would be killed by the Bolsheviks, rushed them away to the Urals under the care of teachers and nurse-maids in the hope that there they would find food and safety. From that day to this the parents and children have never been reunited.

" During the winter their money gave out, food was almost impossible to procure, and many of the teachers and nurses deserted or died. Then the American Red Cross heard of the terrible situation and went to the rescue. It was found impossible to establish the colony at Omsk, where they were, so it was decided to put them in four trains of twenty-four box cars each, and hurry them to Vladivostock.

" When they arrived, almost a thousand in number, the city was in utter chaos, fairly seething with riots and lawlessness. The Red Cross had no time to make adequate preparation for the children, but it quartered them in the barrack buildings on Russian Island. The task of making these habitable was immense. We worked night

and day, and the more my arms and back ached from the unusual strain, the more thankful I was that I had gotten here in time to do my share.

" First of all we fed the children until they could not eat another mouthful. Then we started out to establish order, and organize schools—rather a difficult job without adequate teachers, books, maps, etc. But whenever I look into the pinched, drawn faces of these children, and catch the look of fear that still lingers in their stricken eyes, I am ready to tackle *any* job that will help them.

" Happily there has been one bright spot. A Red Cross Division in America, getting the news of our colony, sent over a Santa Claus Ship full of warm clothing, toys, candy, etc. We had a grand celebration, but there was one dreadful handicap. The children, though pleased, had forgotten how to smile! In vain we tried to stir up some merriment. I cannot remember hearing a child laugh since I've been on the Island."

Now, Mate, if that isn't a terrible picture I don't know one! I have been blaming myself ever since that letter came for not going with Jack to Siberia. I could not have been of much service in the schoolroom, but I'd have gotten a laugh out of those homesick kids if I had to walk on my hands to do it!

Kate and I have started the local Red Cross to working for the Russian Island Colony, and I give four mornings in the week to making garments. This brings me into intimate touch with the Japanese ladies of quality, who practise their newly acquired English on me, and ask me innumerable questions concerning Occidental manners and customs.

It is so much easier to teach other people my language than to learn theirs. Besides, I think everybody will speak English in heaven, so why bother about learning anything else?

Tokyo,
February.

It is a glorious morning. The sun is shining, the river sparkling, and old Fuji deigns to show her white and radiant self against a steel-blue sky. The contrast with yesterday's gloom and pouring rain makes me feel terribly frisky, but the morning's programme contains nothing more exhilarating than a visit to the graves of the Forty-seven Rouin. I am not very keen on cemeteries, but there is something rather peppy in the idea of forty-seven old boys having the courage to take themselves off the earth at the same time.

Yesterday as I was going up to a tea, my jinrikisha man took me through an old part of Tokyo. Honestly I had a lump in my throat, because it brought back so many memories of the beautiful old Japan. We passed an old garden and the plum trees were in full bloom, with great limbs of them hanging over the stone

fence. My 'rikisha man has but one eye, but with that even he caught the beauty of it and stopped for me to admire while he did the same. They have great fun with me here in the house about this old man. His daughter was helper in the kitchen, and I did some little thing for her, I have forgotten what it was; but it made me solid with the family, and whenever I send for a 'rikisha this old monkey won't let anybody come but himself. If there is more than one of us to go he always takes me whether or no, and he is slower than cold molasses. However, I am not insensible to the gentleman's kindly attention.

I have acquired another friend of quite another type. Last week one of the editorial staff of the *Japan Advertiser* telephoned to ask if he could come down and talk with me. I expected to see a pert young Englishman of the know-it-all variety. Imagine my astonishment when a highly cultured young Hindu walked in! He had been in Japan six months and knew more than most people know in a year. He could

rip off the language as if he had been reared in it, and if ever I was entertained it was by his fresh view of things in general. He had never been to America, but his familiarity with cities and people kept me on the *qui vive* to answer. Of course he did not mind staying all the afternoon, and I did not mind having him. We talked India and Ceylon and Kandy till dark. Then we talked the future of Japan till the supper bell rang. He told me many intersting things that had happened in Colombo during the war, and of the recent trouble in Amritsa. His keen insight into affairs and his cool judgment amazed me. It was only on leaving that he reverted to the Orient. He looked at me strangely for a moment, then he said :

" Madam, I see your aura. It is a pale purple." I told him I didn't like purple, that it was not becoming, and that if he couldn't exchange it for me I would not wear my aura at all. You should have seen his face ! He looked hurt and offended, and has never come back.

Tokyo,
February.

You little thought, when you asked me to get you some information concerning Japanese women in industry, what a fuse you were firing! For ten days Kate and I have constituted ourselves a committee of two to tramp from one end of Tokyo to the other visiting factories.

It would be far pleasanter to write you about cherry festivals, acres of blooming iris, and century-old gardens, where blood-red maples listen to the everlasting song of waterfalls. But since the other is what you want to hear about, here goes.

As you know, this great sprawly city, with its hybrid customs and its commercial atmosphere, has never appealed to me, and now that I have seen all these new factories—silk, cotton, hosiery, furniture, munitions—and had a glimpse of all that goes on behind their sordid walls, I long

more than ever for the templed hills of Nikko and the serene waters of the Inland Sea.

All over this big city, factories have sprung up almost over-night. They have infested the land like a cloud of locusts, and have proved quite as devouring. They eat up the young girlhood of Japan as the locusts do tender plants. One can see in factory after factory thousands of girls under fifteen years and hundreds under twelve, with hours of labour anywhere from ten to—well, as long as their bodies will stand upright.

It was easy for me to see why Kate was in bitter warfare with so many managers and owners. Of course there are a few places where conditions are excellent—good food, good pay. But take the average! Something woefully wrong with this old world, my friend, when any country, mine and yours, or this, permits children to go into factories, under a two or three years' contract, where the most of them are never allowed to leave the premises unless a stretcher takes them, as it usually does; where unclean

dormitories are so crowded, if one little weary body lying on the floor would turn, hundreds of other small bodies must turn at the same time.

In some of these factories there is a place called a playground. The name is a ghastly joke and the space filled with black mud. I am no labour expert or authority on law, so I appealed to Kate:

"How do they trap them so young?"

"Poor little mites! From birth they are saturated with this nonsense called filial piety. High prices and poor food finished the business." Kate almost snapped out the words. "But," she added, "a change is coming. It has to. The girls in the contract factories die off so fast with tuberculosis it is at last being knocked into some of these wooden-heads that duty is not all on the side of the children."

"Yes, but aren't there any laws for this sort of thing?"

Kate lifted her shaggy brows. "Yes, but laws can be easily twisted when it comes to maximum production at minimum cost. And if

the Western world has failed to enforce them in all these years, what can you expect of Japan ? "

You know how I used to describe the working-women over here, with kimono tucked up, and bright towels about their heads, making a holiday of rice-planting or other field work. Or as water-carriers, spinners, and weavers in the shelter of their homes. Alas ! like the rare old colour prints, that all belongs to the quiet and beautiful past.

High cost of living is mostly to blame, filial piety got in its work, and the struggle with war demands has done the rest. It has forced thousands and thousands of Japan's girlhood out of the free country life into the congested, ill-regulated city life, and it swallows them by the hundreds and greedily calls for more. The saddest part of the whole system is its demand that its victims be young.

But here I am running off at a moral tangent instead of getting down to facts. The truth is, facts are not much in my line and you needn't think that I am going to detail each day's doings

like a catalogue for an auction sale. Nor do I intend to dabble with figures. There are columns of them on this subject. Pieced together they would stretch into miles, and every inch as dry as the sands of the desert.

All that I can do is to try to tell you what I saw, and let you draw your own conclusions.

The first woman in industry I bumped into was the motor-bus girl. The motor-bus is comparatively new in Tokyo. It is built on a low, squat plan, where a man of any height must sit on the floor if the other seats won't go round. The minute you see one of these affairs the name Tumble-bug hops into your mind. It looks like one. It acts like one.

But it was not the name of the 'bus, nor its build, nor its height that made me sit up and take notice. It was the brand-new motor-girl conductor. Her natty uniform and her jaunty cap were as businesslike as those of any conductor you would wish to see. The companies weren't keen about having women conductors. They

had to come to it, though relinquishing a favourite prejudice proved nearly fatal to some of them. Man-power ran short. It was women to the rescue.

Kate and I had much to see and miles to go. It was our good fortune to board a new 'bus with a conductor who knew her business. I couldn't take my eyes off her. Of course there was a crowd and the same old scramble to get off and on that one finds all over the world. The girl did half a dozen things at once and all with swift efficiency and a certain grace. She handled the punch, nipping each transfer from one to five times. She helped the old people and guided the young toddlers. Not once did she miss calling out a street, some of them with names a foot and a half long. And as each passenger alighted her gentle warning became a song: "Step carefully. Leave nothing behind. Don't crowd, but keep in line."

"Do you like it?" I ventured, in Japanese, as we neared the end of the line and the conductor girl had a minute to breathe.

"Very well. Much better than factory business."

"Hours long?"

"So!" An indescribable exclamation which says everything and tells nothing. But her face brightened as she added: "It is not bad. Twenty minutes Bento (lunch) time. Also ten minutes freedom each run."

"Good pay?" I asked.

"Mo tak san," which means "enough." What her enough included I could not say, nor could I persist in finding out. In questioning a Nipponese there comes a time when you feel that a heavy velvet curtain has been gently lowered before your eyes.

When we left her she was beginning her song again: "Step carefully. Leave nothing behind. Don't crowd, but keep in line."

I waved her good-bye, and I wondered if her voice was as fresh and as musical when she stopped her work at ten o'clock at night as it was when she began her song at seven o'clock in the morning.

Nobody can blame Katherine for growing voluble on the subject of long work-hours for women and girls—twelve and fifteen on a stretch. That morning she fairly out-talked the quarrelsome crows as we tramped out to the copper mines. If I ever faced grim reality I did there! It is bad enough to see women coaling ships, and yoked with oxen tilling fields, but neither is as bad as that awful work underground. Silent as the caverns they work in, their muscular bodies scantily clad, they barely glanced at so curious a sight as two foreigners.

Even Kate's magic tongue failed to win them. It took much questioning to learn that three weeks' pay wouldn't buy a decent pair of gloves at home. No wonder life to them was only a grim fight for a bare existence!

I was so low in my mind by the time we left that Kate said she would show me something more cheerful before we went home.

We climbed into jinrikishas and went bowling out into a country road. The mists still covered the vine-clad foothills with silvery haloes. And

the sea ran in ripples of red and gold. Distant mountains of misty grey loomed pale and vague as ghosts. The soft wind whispering through the towering cryptomerias spoke in a thousand tongues, as our jinrikisha men climbed the upward path on winged feet.

One swift whirl and the beauty of the morning was nearly forgotten in the sight that lay before us, one of those violent contrasts with which the country is constantly side-swiping your belief in the reality of things. Some two or three hundred girls, young and powerful, standing waist-high in a trench making bricks! And with what vim and energy they filled the wooden moulds! Neither was there lack of grace in the flourish of their wooden knives, as in perfect rhythm they smoothed each oblong and laid it on a long wooden board as gently as if it had been a Christmas cake. They were singing, too, something about

"A sparrow swings on a bamboo-tree
And flies away,
Once love perches in my heart
'Tis there for aye."

It seemed a bit incongruous to link sentiment with brickmaking, but a spicy wind, faint with fragrance, came over the flowery thickets and something of childish joy lingered on every face. As we left them singing and full of confidence, the thought flashed through my mind that after all youth is its own compensation for any hardship.

The next day we went to a newspaper office and I saw my subject from another interesting angle. The manager of this particular paper ought to have a memorial arch erected to him by women. His is the only paper in the land which gives ample space to femininity, its work, its social affairs, and the latest styles in stockings and sashes—kimonos never change their cut.

Not only is the paper conducted for women, but by women, and one would have to look far before he could find so cheerfully busy a group as that which I found in an office neither spacious nor sumptuous, but just a place where work could be done and no time lost in powdering noses or reddening lips.

The girls gave me a cordial welcome. They were neither shy, embarrassed, nor bold. Simply women who, having been thrust out into the world, adapted themselves to conditions which their great-grandmothers would have committed hara-kiri before submitting to. The girls could smile, too, at the long hours, at their hard tasks, and at the curious stranger who was asking them all kinds of questions.

They graciously offered me tea and cake, and I smiled too—not at their hospitality, but at the differences in custom in this funny old world.

I watched one of the girls prepare her material for the morrow's issue. Did she luxuriously lounge before a typewriter which was guaranteed to do everything but talk out loud, and click off page after page of neat type? Not so. With sleeves turned back, she dipped a little brush in Indian ink and, beginning at the top of a long strip of paper, she bent to her work of painting characters. Each character on that clean white page looked at me as hopelessly intricate as a mussed-up puzzle, but every stroke told a story,

and her slender fingers went at such a giddy speed it fairly made me cross-eyed to follow. I found it easier to follow the forewoman, who took the work of the girl, and said if I would come along I could have a peep into the composing room.

What sights and sounds! There were rows upon rows of boxes and cases, covered with dust and grime. Men and more men were walking up and down the narrow spaces, each fellow chanting whatever it was he was putting into type. It looked like a junk-shop and sounded like a nest of hornets gone on a strike. But what went out from that room entered thousands of homes, and many a busy woman found her pleasantest moments in its columns. In the book-binding business, the printing business, and in type-setting Japanese women hold their own with the men of their kind. And work of this kind demands a nimble brain. As neither one of us ever went to the head in a spelling match, you will agree it is hard enough to keep up with a proper combination of a simple alphabet of

twenty-six letters. Well, think of handling daily more than nine thousand five hundred separate characters, some with a difference so slight it would take a microscope to find it, yet so vital if omitted it might mean jail or a heavy fine!

We left this busy, humming place with many bows, and Kate said triumphantly: "Come, I've saved the best for the last. The outcome of two years' strenuous effort on the part of the Welfare workers."

It was a brand-new factory, clean and orderly, with a big play-yard where some fifty girls were going through an old folk dance. True, they were so young I wanted to give them each a stick of candy and a china doll, but they looked happy, well fed, and content. There were no dormitories—the girls went home at night—but a spacious schoolroom, where time spent each day was compulsory, looked attractive enough to lure the most careless to a little study. Only, under no condition, fair or otherwise, was this any rearing-place for children. Inside the factory itself! My goodness! Mate, you should have

heard the noise of those twenty thousand spindles all a-spindling at once. They whirred and buzzed, clicked and clacked. Row upon row of pink-cheeked girls with heads all be-towelled, handling countless threads, spools, and bobbins with the certainty of a delicate, intricate machine. Watching the graceful movements of so many small, swift hands, I stood fascinated and almost bewildered. Then I heard Kate:

"Otani San!"

There she was, a blue-and-white bandeau about her head, her working kimono tied back, her slender white hands flying from bobbin to thread, from thread to bobbin. It was a joyous meeting, and Kate got permission for the girl to spend the next half-hour in the office with her. After devouring every scrap of news we could give her about the baby, she told us about herself.

After leaving the baby in Kate's garden, she hid in the bushes until she saw that it was taken in, then in her thin silk clothes she rushed out into the night, alone, penniless and fearful, to begin life all over again. She sold her silk

kimono and bought a cotton one, and with the money left paid her board and lodging until she got a place in the factory as floor cleaner. You would have to see Otani San, and know the way she had been living, to realize the heroism of her resolve. After weeks of drudgery and hardship she succeeded in getting a better job and more pay, and was now fast becoming a skilled workman. So fearful was she of being found by the broker, that she had made no attempt to see her child, but when Kate told her he had given her up for good and all, her face fairly radiated happiness. "And now I may have my baby?" she asked. Kate tried to persuade her not to take on the extra burden until she was better able to support it. She straightened her slender shoulders and laughed happily:

"But I am strong," she declared. "I can bear anything now."

Later, however, she listened to reason, and agreed to leave the baby with Kate until spring, with the understanding that she should have it every Sunday.

Well, as you see, my investigations, as usual, have gone from the general to the particular. But I hope I have shown you what industrial conditions have made possible for at least one Japanese woman. I believe she represents a large class who will be only too eager to abandon the easy downward path, now that the other harder but more honest way is open to them.

When I got home I found a letter from Burney Spencer. He said things had quieted down a bit, and he might not need my help, but that it was a tremendous relief to know that he could call upon me if necessary. In the letter were two photographs.

No, I shall not tell you what they looked like till I am sure, for pictures are "fair deceivin'." But late as it was I flew downstairs and showed them to Kate. She looked and looked, then said:

"The luck's all yours, Lady. But I'd have young Kentwood deported if I were you."

Tokyo,
March 17.

All Hail to you on Saint Patrick's day in the morning. It started out to be pleasant and then, being Irish, changed its mind, and now there is no telling *what* it's going to do. Little difference does it make to me! Jack will be here to-morrow! I am so happy I can scarcely sit still long enough to write this letter. All morning I've been out in Kate's garden, digging like mad and singing aloud for the very joy of living. The sun was raining diamonds on the sea, the plum trees flinging out their blossoms, white and pink and red, the young willows joyfully waving their long green fringes over our neighbour's wall, and the whole world seemed to be encircled in one vast smile.

"A magic web, a sylvan dream
Where sunlight pale gilds waves agleam,
And pines rise clear to guard the beam,
Oh, little Nippon garden!

"In cloistered mountains soft winds rise,
And lavish lights from summer skies
Blue-mirrored in the shadows lie
In the little Nippon garden."

No, I am not responsible for it; I wish I were.

At recess time the children came running out and insisted on tying a Japanese baby on my back. I had never had a youngster strapped on my shoulders before, and I can't say I found anything in the method to recommend it. I marvel at the endurance of Japanese mothers who work all day with that heavy burden on their backs. There is some compensation, I must confess, in the little bobbing head so close to one's own, and the soft little coos and the joyous kicks with which the baby expresses its approval of the proceeding.

As I trotted up and down the paths with the baby on my back, and the children screaming with laughter, a solemn old crane, standing on one leg, surveyed me with dignified disapproval. I suppose on the whole the crane was right. He represented public opinion, which, like the poor, is with us always.

Since I last wrote you I have been seeing a great deal of Perry Bickford. He is getting his eyes opened all right. He came over with a grand idea of smashing Japan to bits and then recasting it in a New England mould. All the broad primrose ways were to be converted into straight and narrow paths, and Buddha was to be banished for ever. Well, he has been here nearly three months, and, if you will believe it, the aged empire is going on exactly as it has for centuries!

Very gradually the youth is beginning to realize that over here he is no more than a pinch of salt in the Pacific Ocean, and the knowledge is doing him a world of good. He really is tremendously in earnest, and when I hear him and Kate talk about the work the Y.M.C.A. is doing I get as thrilled as they are.

Last night when dinner was over Perry said he had an engagement with a Mr. Sugi to make a speech over in the criminal quarters. Knowing that Kate had an engagement also, I begged Perry to take me with him.

" It's rough company," he warned me. " Mr. Sugi is working out about the toughest proposition I ever saw."

Of course that fired my curiosity, and I went for my wraps. On our long walk across the city Perry told me about Mr. Sugi and his work.

It seems that this born aristocrat, a member of an old Samurai family, on becoming a Christian twenty years ago decided to give his life to serving his fellow men. He procured from the Government a narrow strip of land on the river bank, and with his own funds and what he could collect from friends he started a sort of hospice for the wretched. At first the down-and-outs collected there—dope fiends, men who were hungry, men who were homeless. But before long the word went abroad that discharged convicts were also welcome, and gradually it grew into a refuge for criminals, not only those who had served their term, but those who were still at large. Every piece of human wreckage that happened to be swept up on the shores of the " Quarters " was given a shelter and food

for the night. Those who wanted to stay were given work in the factories near by.

When we reached our destination we found two police boxes flanking the big gate.

"I should think they would scare the evildoers away!" I said.

"Not at all," said Perry; "you couldn't persuade one or even two of those officers to go into the Quarters. Sometimes when they are looking for a criminal they march through in a body, but even then Mr. Sugi always goes with them to prevent their being molested. There is no police force in the Empire that could handle them, and yet since Mr. Sugi opened the Quarters no crime has ever been committed there, and a very small percentage of the men have gone back to the old life."

I was naturally keen to see this master of men; and you can imagine my surprise when an old, stoop-shouldered man, with white hair and the gentlest of grey eyes, came forward to meet us. He wore the silk kimono of a Japanese gentleman, and carried a pink rose in his hand.

Never have I seen more perfect courtesy than his.

We were taken into a big shed and given seats on a platform facing the most extraordinary audience I ever saw. Not a man in it but had a criminal record, and every face bore evidence of crime, brutality, or disease.

While we were waiting for the preliminaries to be over, Mr. Sugi told me with pride how "his boys" had gone forth during a recent terrible flood and rescued hundreds of lives by their heroism.

All the time he was talking I kept getting more and more nervous about the reception that would be given to the stern, uncompromising puritanical Perry. He did not even speak their language, and it seemed absurd to hope that he could hold their attention.

By the time he was to speak the crowd had become noisy and restless, and even Mr. Sugi's gentle eyes were troubled.

Perry got up awkwardly and stepped to the front of the platform, and I trembled for him.

But it was only for a moment. He stood absolutely still, and his eagle eye swept that disorderly room with such a compelling glance that in two seconds you could have heard a pin drop.

Then he began to speak, with Sugi as interpreter—and that is where *I* got the surprise of my life! From the moment he opened his lips he held us all spell-bound! With no attempt to talk down to his audience, no effort to entertain or amuse them, he talked as one struggling human being to another. With a solemnity and dignity amazing in one so young, he poured forth his message with a very passion of eloquence, and before he ended he had those men dreaming dreams and seeing visions. It was like a miracle the way their heavy, sodden faces, one after another, lit up with the light of hope!

When we started home I was still tingling with emotion.

"Why on earth didn't you study for the ministry?" I demanded of Perry.

A shadow crossed his face.

"I did," he said, "for four years, then I gave it up."

"But why?"

"Well, you see, I've got rather a bad throat. One night like this and I'll be speechless for twenty-four hours. The doctors said I had to cut the whole business."

"But your gift for oratory! Your wonderful power as a speaker——"

He waved it aside. "Oh, there are lots of ways you can help men without talking to them." Then he added wistfully, "The tough part of it is that that just happens to be *my* way."

For the first time I saw Perry Bickford as he really was—a man destined for a career in one profession, side-tracked by fate into another. Self-conscious and austere and unapproachable with men individually, and eloquent, compelling, and tender with them in a crowd!

I tried to tell him what I thought of his talk, but I might as well have tried to compliment a turtle.

Then I took another tack.

"Are you just as successful in influencing girls as you are men?" I asked.

He looked at me in surprise.

"I don't know anything about girls. Of course I dance with them occasionally, and as co-workers they are hard to beat, but of course all that is on the surface."

"But weren't you ever in love?" I persisted.

For the first time since I'd known him he treated me to a hearty laugh.

"Heavens, no. I've never had time to fall in love. Why did you want to know?"

I gave him a woman's reason, and my thoughts flew to a certain little photograph on my dresser.

"I may need your co-operation, Perry," I said quite gravely. "If Mr. Spencer sends his girls over to me, may I count on your help?"

"Oh! I am all right with children," he cheerfully assured me, and I saw that he was still ready to back the bet he had made with Austin.

Tokyo,
May.

Dearest Mate:

Guilty, your Honour, but recommended to mercy! Weeks have skipped by since my last letter to you crossed the Pacific. *Cherchez l'homme!* When Jack came I dropped everything to be with him. We have had a wonderful month, following the cherry blossoms from the Inland Sea to the Chuzenji Mountains. We have drunk tea in the Temple of a Thousand Mats on the sacred Island of Miyajima; we have visited my old haunts at Myanoshita; paid our respects to the Daibutsu at Kamakura; and best of all wandered once again through the enchanting cryptomerias of Nikko, following the memory-haunting summons of the temple bells.

Of course there isn't time to tell you a tenth of our experiences; but one I must recount, for it has to do with a romance and wedding bells, both of which I know you approve.

When you realize that most weddings in this land are as untouched with romance as a telephone pole is by poetry, you will rise up with me and give thanks that some kindly fate took a hand in this one and gave a dash of colour to the usual cold and business-like preliminaries.

Yomi San, Kate's oldest and dearest protégée, who was rescued from a tea house when she was six, and has lived here with Kate ever since, having arrived at the mature age of seventeen, began to turn her thoughts toward love.

Whenever she worked in the garden we could hear her clear young voice poured out in sentimental love ditties. A fateful breeze caught up the song and whisked it over the river, where, above the chant of many boatmen and the swish of paddles and oars, it fell upon the ears of Moto San.

Moto San is the rich young owner of a fleet of sampans, and a winning smile. He heard those appealing love songs at early dawn, and also in the evening when the sun tumbled down into the sea; and the more he heard the more

curious he became. Oftener and oftener his sampan loitered under the willow-bordered banks of our garden, and one day he was rewarded by a big pink rose being flung over the hedge. After that there were smiles and salutations, followed very promptly by a friend of the first party, who was Moto San, calling upon Kate, who was the friend of the second party. There were weeks of talk and investigation, of adjusting religious difficulties, and reconciling the youth's family to the marriage. But Kate put it through in great style, and managed in the end to convince the Moto San clan that she was conferring a wonderful favour upon them by consenting to the marriage.

You should have heard the hubbub of glee we were in for a week following the announcement! The kitchen buzzed with merriment while skilful hands wrought wondrous birds of many colours and flowers of curious hues from sticky bean paste and rice flour.

All the time little wishes and big ones kept hopping into my heart that I might sit you down

in Kate's library and reveal to you what magic can be worked by nimble fingers with a bunch of bamboo and a posy or so.

Fragrant San, Truth San, and all the other little Sans in the house took a hand in it, and quickly the workaday room was transformed into an aerie of blossoms and fluffy green things. We had a wedding bell, too. Kate and I thought one quite enough. The girls still lower their eyes when we talk about it. They are shocked to think the groom did not have his own private bell all to himself!

The great day arrived—bright but breezy. Everything was ready. The bride as dainty as a fan picture in her pink-and-grey kimono; the groom's rich silks heavy enough to support him in time of need; and everybody, from Kate to the baby, arrayed in the best holiday outfit.

We were all on tiptoe waiting for the minister. He came, but he nearly didn't. My goodness! What a near tragedy! Just as the jinrikisha man who brought him lowered the shafts of the light vehicle in front of Kate's gate a gust of

wind caught the frail affair broadside and whisked it across the narrow road right into ten feet of water!

I never knew a fat man could jump so far and so fast. His swift leap saved him. Yes, he could swim. But think what it would have meant. That man is a perfectly good Methodist!

His parsonship came in smiling and to the tune of "Onward, Christian Soldiers." We did our best to make it a solemn occasion. I had offered to play a real wedding march, but Yomi San said she liked the hymn "more better." The hymn she got. She should be denied nothing this day.

The wedding breakfast was a hilarious success, especially as the groom had to be taught how to use a fork. We didn't dare give him a knife. Afterward came the big surprise. Kate and Jack and I were asked to go on the wedding excursion with the Newly Weds. We did, and gave variety to the company and considerable joy to ourselves.

The trip was a visit to Moto San's adopted

sister. She was the wife of a rich farmer, and the home rested on the bank of Income Root River, a few hours' sail from Tokyo.

The honeymoon barge was only a sampan. But such a sampan! Built for the occasion of satiny wood and bronze trimmings. Silky mats and red-lacquer tables for the tiny room below —in case of bad weather—and a miniature deck above for scenery viewing if the weather held fair.

After much bustle we went on board. Our left-behind household came to see us off. So did the entire neighbourhood. Never would any soul within a radius of two miles have us think he was not interested. They lined the embankment, their gay clothes topping the ancient moss-covered sea wall with a band of brightest colour.

With much merry talk following us, we started. We thought we were off, and then we weren't! Ever since the wintry night the baby was left in the garden it has been Yomi's special care. And when it saw its beloved big sister

departing it raised its voice in such heart-breaking cries that Yomi begged to take it with her. Moto San, like all his species, thought it wrong to deny a child anything, so we turned about, and soon, with the additional passenger tied to the back of the wife of the head boatman, our assorted bridal party was off.

Now, Mate, we surely were becoming to the scenery, and maybe you are picturing us as being shoved up-stream by something as unpicturesque as steam. Look again. It was two men, two poles, a big white sail, and a frisky breeze that sent us skimming over the dancing waters.

The boatmen, kimonoed in blue, their headbands tied at a rakish angle, looked as if they might have stepped from the train of an ancient daimyo. Maybe they were taking a holiday from Nirvana to have one more fling at a fast-vanishing custom, for some change has come to the Rice Field River since fifty years took flight.

In other days the feudal lords used it as their play place. Having laid aside their steel-ring

armour for the moment, they could unbend their dignity long enough to give themselves gorgeous tea-parties in gold-lacquered barges which had the length and breadth of the stream to themselves.

Now the peaceful river of old is one of the beehive spots of the empire. Sometimes it is so full of water craft there is barely room for the tide to run. Sailing-vessels, coasting vessels, big freighters and little ones, which are the moving links between a vast interior country and the great outside world. It boasts a social side, too, for a large majority of its workers spend their entire lives on its surface. Everybody knows everybody else—also his business. Moto San, being prosperous and popular, made our sampan the object of every variety of salute.

Whistles, beating drums, and a chorus of Banzais. At a given signal there burst from every mast a sun flag. Sometimes a string of them. The reflection danced on the waters and made a pathway of pink over which we glided. Moto and Mrs. Moto stood up and made acknow-

ledgments. Kate and Jack and I made ourselves as scarce as possible.

The puffy breeze caught the sail and spread it wide. The boatmen, pleased as children at their audience, and proud of their skill, hurled their broad shoulders at the long push poles. The combination sent us skipping through the crowded traffic. It was as exciting as the last ring at a county fair, and the baby from its perch did the crowing for the company.

I wish very much I could send you a picture of the boat-wife. Only the speediest lens could do her justice. She was the most actively active person I ever saw. With one hand she guided the boat's rudder—that was her business in life when she wasn't cooking or washing or tending children, or loading freight or scrubbing. That afternoon with one hand she steered our course, with the other she fanned to a bright glow the *hibachi* charcoal. If it called for more, out went her long toes, doing their work as skilfully as the latest contrivance in tongs and shovels. All the time she was amusing the

baby on her back. In between she brewed us a cup of tea and cherry leaves. And I suppose, had it been necessary, she could have prepared supper and put the baby and all the rest of us to bed without missing a lick. There are many thousands like her, and they are a mighty help in keeping the underpinning of the empire from sagging.

Soon we left behind the noise and the throng. For an hour it was a long stretch of smooth water. Then we shot around the base of a perky little mountain. It was like opening the covers of a book long closed to me. Before us lay page after page of the rainbow country. Its beauty lulled our hearts to rest as a mother's song soothes a restless child. Not that any one of us was in particular need of soothing. But, as you say—in this troubled old world it is good to lay up treasures of peace and beauty.

Priceless gifts hung all about us. The country bloomed like a garden of magic. The low mountains, terraced to the top, flung out patches of colour in the sunlight. In the silvery water

of the paddy fields men and women worked in patches of emerald green. The air was full of sparkle and dragon-flies. Truly, the scene was vivid. It bade our spirits rise to gladsome heights. They did, and, shutting the door in the face of every care and convention, we let our souls out for a sure-enough holiday.

For an hour the boatmen poled, the baby slept, and dreams were dreamed. Then sunset clouds dimmed the glory of the day. Wild things of the near-by forest called to their mates. From out of somewhere dropped a blue mist, mysterious and alluring. And if you got all the good wishes I sent you in that perfect hour of twilight, about now your spirit is fluttering around as joyously as a white butterfly in a rosy cloud.

From the shore lights began to glimmer and voices called to indicate the spot where we should land. We found the old moss-covered steps by the light of two flaming torches. They led us through an ancient gateway into a great court-yard. It looked like a bit of Mardi Gras strayed

far from home. It wasn't, though. Just everything that belonged to the estate, except the cows and the chickens, came to do honour to the occasion: serving maids, weaving and spinning ones, rice-planters, cooks, and overseers—all with their brightest and best on their backs, and in their hands a big yellow, blue, or crimson lantern.

We marched through rows of them, and it was over a pathway of dancing lights and fantastic shadows that Moto San and Yomi led the way. The rest of us followed up to what seemed to me half a block of paper doors, all done in tiny squares and clearly outlined by the soft glow behind them. It was the grand entrance way—the whole lower floor thrown into one spacious room, and the only ornament, so far as I could see, in the soft light of many candles, was the stately white-haired master and his picture wife. They sat on thick cushions and the cushions rested on the yellow floor mats. I felt I was taking part in a tableau. But when we entered into a long spell of bows and triple

bows—enough to dislocate any but the most hardened neckpiece—its realism was most impressive. However, we survived. So will the memory of the warm welcome and the glimpse of many rooms, rich with carved panels and gold screens. We passed through them on the way to our apartment, where, with the flourish of a hair-brush and the prinking up of a bow or so, we were ready for all the quaint delights of the evening.

When we returned to the great "audience chamber" a large company awaited us. The guests were many and varied. Our host invited us to rest our honourable bodies. We did, on luxurious cushions of heavy brocade. Of course Moto San and Yomi were placed in front of the *tokonoma*—translated "seat of honour." Jack and Kitty and I came next, with all the other guests down the line. Jack and I surely did look like two black-and-white misfits in a gorgeous Oriental frieze. It wasn't the way we looked, however, but the way we felt, that helped along the evening's sparkle.

Everything ready, the head of the house clapped his hands three times. Doors slid back, and in came a row of little maids, lovely enough to frame, each bearing a short-legged table and each table holding bowls, plates, and chop-sticks. Everything of gold lacquer—and the food! No, it wasn't of lacquer, but there was one guest who wouldn't have cared if some of it had been. Anyhow it was beautiful to look upon. The time was now come for Yomi to display her wedding gifts, which she did with an eagerness that was a joy to behold. They were many and varied. Inlaid tables, rare old kakemono, carved lacquer trays, rolls of silk, folded into the shape of ships in honour of the groom's calling, and bits of wonderful old carvings. But the gift that pleased me most was a pair of live ducks, the sentimental variety which grow only in Japan. If one dies, the mate immediately does likewise.

After the gifts were exhibited, the telegrams of congratulation were read. Like a cloak, convention was laid aside. Everybody was humanly

gay and laughing. The fun ran high. And when the little bamboo boxes by the side of each guest were filled with all the table delicacies not disposed of, and each box wrapped in a square of yellow silk ready for guests to take home, the hour had come for an evening's entertainment such as I have never seen before and possibly never shall again.

If some long-ago Mikado court had suddenly come to life, it couldn't have been more like itself. There were samurai, flower-girls of the past and present, dancing maids, acrobats, and a shogun or so, each playing his part to the utmost —the shining armour and the tints of priceless brocades and embroideries outcolouring an artist's palette.

If it had not been for Katherine Jilson's hearty laugh and merry comments I should have believed it all a dream where grown-up fairies were giving a flower festival with a strong Oriental flavour. It was late when the good-night ceremony began. But it was worth an hour's rest to see it. The procession started

with the highest and mightiest guest and ended with an old and wrinkled ditch-digger. As it filed by host and hostess, bride and bridegroom and foreign guests, every person with bended knees softly bumped his or her head on the floor. Rather wearing, but it stood for simple-hearted kindness, happy friendships, and some hundred bows.

When I tumbled in between a pile of silken comforts on the floor of our bedroom I really felt as if I should apologize to my overworked back. Kate said she didn't feel a twinge. I guess if thirty-five years of practice doesn't make perfect, eternity won't.

Dawn found me awake. I had seen the inside of this house and I wanted to see the outside. Well I knew its creator, though dust of a century or so, could but choose a royal setting for the coming true of his beautiful dream. Slipping from my soft resting-place, I crept downstairs and out-doorward. I guessed right. Never had nature and an ancient ancestor done a better job. All about me lay the most wonderful old garden, with winding paths, and

half-circle bridges spanning broad lotus ponds. Through long vistas of stately old trees, and rows of lanterns, I could glimpse the river, just catching the first faint flush of the morning. It was all so quiet and breathless that I felt as if I were in some other world.

In front of the house, down by the landing-place, was a great red torii, the temple gate on which believers hang their paper prayers. Seized by a sudden impulse, I took a tablet and pencil from my bag and pencilled two lines. Then I slipped down to the torii and hung up my prayer with the rest. It was for the happiness of the young couple who had spent their first night together in this enchanted spot.

By noon we were once more on the river, sweeping homeward. It must have been steep down-grade all the way. We sped past clusters of huts, their great grey roofs standing out against low hill-sides all ablaze with crimson lilies. We left far behind the little sunlit fields of rice and barley, dashed into a great gorge and out again into the crowded corner of the Rice

Field River. It was like closing the gates to an enchanted country, but I've stored away a wonderful memory of it, and whenever the world gets too sordid for me I can always slip away to that bit of Oriental Paradise tucked away among the giant cryptomerias on the banks of Income Root River.

Imperial Hotel,
Tokyo,
June.

If your rheumatisms were in your arms instead of your legs, I shouldn't hesitate to send you an S.O.S. call that would bring you across the Pacific!

I have suddenly and without warning acquired a family! Two girls, a Chinese amah, a monkey, and *four* cages full of canary birds. Now if you can beat that, go to it!

When I think of the mood of exalted tranquillity in which I penned you my last epistle, I smile. The very next day Jack got a cable from Burney Spencer, saying, "Am sending girls to you via Shinyo Maru." That was all, but as Heaven is my witness it was enough! It was like a stick of dynamite under our plans. In spite of all my good resolutions, I had to pray for self-control, so I wouldn't blow up too.

I knew it was no time to explain things to my sterner half. It was better to let him swear

at Burney for being a chuck-headed idiot, than to try to propitiate him before he had seen the girls. Besides, one of us *had* to let off steam.

The news necessitated our taking a suite of rooms at the Imperial Hotel and cancelling the passage we had just engaged for Korea. We had not the faintest idea how long we were expected to look after the girls, nor what arrangements Burney intended to make.

Last Saturday Jack went to Yokohama to meet the steamer, and when he came back with his caravan I gave one look, and then, like Mark Twain's spider when it stepped on a hot griddle, I looked surprised, then shrivelled!

Jack came first, a picture of misery, carrying a bird-cage in each hand. Behind him came a girl of ten, bobbed hair, and spindle-legged, also carrying a bird-cage in each hand. Next came a Bellini Madonna of eighteen, a duplicate of the picture Burney had sent, only twice as lovely, and apparently not seeing anything this side of the stars. Bringing up the rear was a

chunk of China—a short, fat person in black satin trousers and blue-and-gold coat, with a round, yellow face, and long, narrow slits for her little black eyes to peep through. In one hand she carried a suit-case, and in the other—"if ye have shudders to shed, prepare to shed them now"—a monkey!

I took in the whole group, then my glance came back to Jack, and I sat down on the steps and roared with laughter. Limmie (that's the fitting soubriquet of the small girl) and the monkey grinned with me, but the amah and the Bellini Madonna, and alas! even my own Jacobus, viewed me with tragic disfavour.

Later, in the privacy of our room, I had to render first aid to Jack's lacerated feelings. He was furious with Burney for sending the girls without writing him in advance. He was impatient with me for taking the matter humorously. So it was up to me to straighten things out if I could, and at least clear my conscience. I pushed Jack into a big chair, perched myself on the arm of same and told my story. What

amazing things can be accomplished with a husband by talking to him in a honeyed voice and ruffling his hair at the same time. In a short while Jack cooled down as to the girls, but he stood firm on one point. He insisted that I, mind you, I, must get rid *at once* of those "blankety-blank birds, and that blank, blink, blinkety-blank monkey!"

That happened two days ago, and our family circle, birds and beasts included, is still intact. Kindly but firmly I impressed upon Jack the fact that Burney Spencer was *his* friend. I told him that I would stand by him in his dilemma —wasn't that nice of me? And I added I had never known him to go back on friend or foe, when in need. I also told him that he was the head of our household and as such must issue orders and enforce discipline.

Of course I was bluffing, for I knew full well that whatever was done would have to be done through Mrs. Fong Tu, and that she would probably be managing the whole bunch of us inside of a week. But one has to use diplomacy

where men are concerned, and Jack is no exception.

Mrs. Fong Tu has a jaw like Jack Dempsey's. She seldom uses it for conversation, but when she does she gets results. She does most of her work with her small, bead-like eyes, which follow those two girls with untiring vigilance. Hilda, the older girl, gives her no trouble, but Limmie gives her a run for her money sixteen hours out of twenty-four.

I have tried in vain to get out of Hilda how long they expect to be here, and what their father's instructions were. She simply turned upon me her limpid orbs, and said, " He told us to come straight to you and Uncle Jack, and you would tell us what to do."

How that girl has lived to be eighteen without shedding " the trailing clouds of glory " is more than I can understand. She's like a tall, slender white flower, utterly detached, with apparently no will of her own, but sweet and pliant and yielding to every passing breeze. Mrs. Fong Tu tells her when to get up and when to go to

bed, what to eat and what to wear. With a little animation and vitality she would be irresistible, and she could easily sweep all mankind off their feet; but nothing seems to stir her interest. At least I could have said that yesterday, to-day I am more hopeful.

Perry Bickford came in while we were at lunch to-day, and, Mrs. Fong Tu not being present, I amused myself by throwing the two young people at each other's heads. Hilda answered all questions in monosyllables, dropping her eyelashes whenever she was spoken to. But Perry was very tactful and kept the conversation general. I could see, however, that the frost in his eyes was melting, and the stern lines in his face softening every time he looked at her. Jack says I imagined every bit of it, but he was too busy keeping Limmie's elbows off the table, and her hands out of the finger-bowl to know what was going on.

Later.

Rejoice with me! the family is no longer intact. The birds have flown! When we went

down to dinner to-night, the dining-room was in confusion. Old Tanaka, the head waiter whose poise is proverbial, was standing on a chair frantically waving a napkin, two other waiters were chasing a fluttering object from one table to another, while four frightened canaries were circling over the heads of the indignant diners.

Jack and I looked at each other in chagrin. We knew without being told what had happened, and we hesitated between brazenly ignoring our connexion with the disaster, or beating ignominious retreat.

Tanaka settled the matter for us:

"The foreign missy," he protested indignantly, "she bring four cages full of sing birds, and let them all loose in the dining-room."

"It's an aviary!" cried Limmie indignantly, emerging heels first from under the nearest table where she had been trying to capture one of her pets. "If they wouldn't chase the birds I could coax them back! But they are opening the windows! They are letting them out!

Stop 'em! Stop 'em, Uncle Jack!" And with a shriek like a Comanche Indian she flew down the length of the crowded dining-room, screaming her protests and crying at the top of her voice.

It was ten minutes before the hubbub subsided. Limmie, frantic with rage, was removed bodily from the scene and turned over to Mrs. Fong Tu, and Jack is now in the office trying to propitiate the irate manager. We shall probably be told that our rooms are engaged to another party after next week.

I am simply desperate! Even Kate Jilson has no solution to offer for our problem. She is unfamiliar with the Chinese and all their ways, and says she can do nothing so long as Mrs. Fong Tu is in command. My next letter may be written from Padded Cell No. 9. In the meanwhile pray for me.

Your letter was bully,
And so are you;
My answer is feeble—
'Tis the best I can do:
For me and my brains have melted away,
And this is the end of a darned hard day.

Place—Railroad Station.
Time—Midnight.
Dramatis Persona—a Lady.

I am writing this by the uncertain light of a swinging lamp, but when Old Father Time makes me a present of four perfectly good and unoccupied hours I am not going to waste them. It is now twelve o'clock, and having missed my connexion I have to wait until four. The funny thing is that I am actually enjoying the novelty of being alone—at least practically alone, for the little maid I am taking up with me is sound asleep. After the hubbub and confusion of the past month, solitude is as grateful as darkness after a prolonged blaze of light.

What we have been through would fill a dozen letters, and if my hair wasn't the particular shade of tan that doesn't turn grey there would be plenty of silver threads among the gold. The past three weeks at the Imperial Hotel has added ten years to my life and almost

thrown Jack into nervous prostration. When Limmie wasn't doing something perfectly outrageous, Mrs. Fong Tu was having a row with a bell-boy or a chambermaid. Japan and China fought it out from morning until night.

Then to cap the climax Perry Bickford had to fall in love with Hilda. I saw him thawing that first day, but I was not prepared for the flood that was to follow! A man can't keep his emotions dammed up for twenty-eight years, and then let them loose without danger. Every hour he could spare from his work he was at the hotel, and when he was not there he was sending notes or telephoning.

Jack, goaded on by that awful Mrs. Fong Tu, decided to put a stop to the affair. He announced that the young people should not see each other. The result was painful. Hilda grew pale and pensive and refused to eat; Perry enlisted my sympathies to such an extent that I quarrelled with Jack. Everybody was angry with everybody else, and the situation was becoming acute.

About that time Limmie and a small boy devil

from Chicago climbed out on the roof of the hotel, and had to be rescued by the fire department. Whereupon we were politely but firmly requested to depart!

I was actually relieved! Anything to get a new deal. All I wanted was a lodge in some vast wilderness, and it looks now as if I were going to get my wish.

Jack saw an advertisement in a Tokyo paper of a furnished house to let in Karuizawa, and he promptly rented it for the summer. Burney's last letter casually refers to September the first as the earliest possible date on which he could come for his family, so that leaves us two months to live through before he arrives.

If we can only turn Limmie out to pasture, chain the old Chinese dragon, separate the young lovers, perhaps we can have a little peace. At any rate we are going to try for it, and I am now on my way to Karuizawa with a Japanese maid to get the house ready, and incidentally to take a week's rest before the next round.

When I climbed into the train to-night, hot

and tired, and very cross with the best husband in the world, I wouldn't have believed that in less than an hour I'd be feeling like myself again. Someone complimented me once on surmounting my troubles, and Jack said, " You might just as well praise a bubble for coming to the top of the water. She can't help it ! " So I am taking no credit to myself for the fact that I am as gay as a lark in spite of the fact that I am stranded in this God-forsaken spot with only a cock-eyed old ticket-agent for company.

No sooner had our dinky little train got out of the station, than I forgot my woes in the delight of the landscape. Baby waterfalls and young cascades cavorted past red temple gates and mossy shrines to join the rushing river in far-away valleys. The good old sun, just for a last fling, streaked with gold the apple-green haze of ricefields and terraced hills. It lingered long enough to turn the lily-covered straw roofs of humble former huts into glory spots ; then, having done a good day's work, it tumbled to the place it always goes at the end of any kind of day.

The night shadows soon shut out my pictures, and I turned to the inside of the car for amusement. If you could once see a Japanese sleeping-car at bedtime, you would have a smile on tap for the rest of your life. The space between the berths, which run lengthwise, is about wide enough for a cat to hump its back in, yet all the passengers elect to change their kimonos in the aisle at the same time. To-night a very fat man got his arms entangled in the sleeves of his kimono, and a vicious lurch of the train sent him sprawling backward to the floor, carrying another passenger with him. It was bad enough for them to be wedged in that narrow space, but when continued bumps sent bottles, baskets, and bundles from the racks above, the mêlée was something fierce. What almost finished me were the profuse apologies that poured from both prostrate gentlemen. They apologized for being clumsy, for the roughness of the road, for the lack of skill of the engineer, for the Government for pushing up the tariff.

When I got into my berth, which for width

and softness resembled a kitchen shelf, I knew I'd never be able to stay put without assistance. A fellow passenger, seeing my struggle to effect an anchorage, offered her kimono sash. The sash was strong enough to hang me by the neck until I was dead. I tied one end to my waist, and the other securely to the parcel rack. It worked all right, only I think I must have been jerked to the end of my tether several times during the night, as I dreamed I was a brand-new angel learning to fly!

About eleven o'clock I was routed out by the small conductor, who must have been all of sixteen years, and who told me that the train did not go through to Karuizawa and that I must get out in five minutes. So I woke up my new maid, who rejoices in the name of Lotus Blossom, and we got out at this station, where we must wait for our train until 4 a.m.

Having made my peace with Jack in a long and contrite letter, and having indited this ambling epistle to you, I will now drape myself on a bench and take a nap. A lady who has

slept on everything, from Mother Earth to an elephant, is not apt to be fastidious.

Perhaps by the time you get this things will have straightened out and we will have settled down for a peaceful summer. The prayers of the congregation are requested.

Karuizawa,
Two days later.

I've no earthly business stopping to write a letter when there is so much to be done. But you know me! I am like a porcupine, whenever I am stirred up I shoot a quill!

With the aid of jinrikishas, baggage wagon, and several coolies, I succeeded in getting myself and household goods safely landed, then I drew a deep breath of relief and sat down on the porch of my newly acquired mansion to look about me. Through a long vista of guardian pines I could look across miles of hill and valley right up the slopes to the peak of Asama Yama, the fierce old giantess of a volcano who is to be my neighbour for the weeks to come.

In the old days I was always hearing blood-curdling stories about the eruptions of Asama Yama, and the lives that were lost annually on the treacherous mountain. But for over a year now she has been smoking her pipe of peace,

and surely the little spiral of white curling against the blue sky looks harmless enough.

After the heat of Tokyo, this place is simply heavenly. When the joy of a new-born day spreads toward you on white, misty wings across purple hills and flowering plains, and a spicy breeze comes frisking through the tree-tops, you don't care a hang whether the trunks get unpacked or not.

The trouble is my maid doesn't care either. She seems to be quite as susceptible to the call of beauty as is her mistress. To tell you the truth, it's about the only call she answers. Not for the world would I deny her the privilege of stopping work to listen to the deep-toned melodies that drift to our door from ancient temple bells ; nor would I put a damper on her delight in rushing into the garden whenever a new butterfly hovers over a lily bed. But when I emerge from my trance and want something to eat, I confess it is a bit irritating to find the stove stone-cold, and Lotus Blossom kneeling on the matted floor painting primroses on an obi !

She neither speaks nor cooks in English. In fact she doesn't cook in any language. Our water supply comes from a deep spring. To bring it where it is needed, there is an old oaken-bucket effect, two of them in fact, on a rope and pulley. At the first pull Lotus gave it up. I scolded, but to no purpose. She looked at her little hands, then she looked helplessly at me and began to cry. So not wishing to go thirsty and bathless, I had to accept the rôle of Rebecca at the well in a performance that threatens to be continuous.

Our bath consists of an iron-bound tub with a perky little smoke-stack running up the side, and a furnace underneath. The fire therein needs to be fed with care and fanned into a gentle blaze. Lotus Blossom overdoes the gentleness. Her only use for a fan is to write poems on it to her absent lover. Poetry-covered fans are strewn all over the house.

I have wired Jack to find another maid. Not a Lotus Blossom, but a Pine Knot.

Fortunately the house is all that was claimed

for it, and more. It is the most adorable abode I have ever inhabited, and I can't wait for Jack to get here to show it to him. If *only* we could have it all to ourselves—but there! what's the use of expecting heaven on earth?

We are going to have a good time in spite of encumbrances, though I am not fooling myself by pretending it's going to be an easy time for me.

In this land of flaming maples, housekeeping is no merry experiment. It is a profession for which a large share of the nation's girlhood goes through a machine-like grilling. It begins in early school life. It ends only when the housekeeper is gathered unto her foremothers, in that perfect place where dust and duties do not collect, and covetous serving-maids do not break through and steal.

One of my Japanese friends summed it up thus:

"Ladies first is not Japanese idea. Of course men protect and take care of women and children, but man is always honoured and respected high, because he is a man! Women

and girls must be taught how to serve him, and don't give him trouble at home; then he can take his whole heart and put into his work!"

Isn't it easy to see why skilful housewifery is a heavy asset in the matrimonial market? And, as matrimony is the end for which almost every Japanese daughter is born, it behoves the father to command the mother to urge the teacher to prepare the daughter for her high and inevitable calling.

It is some climbing to attain the proper standard for wifehood. The average girl's education embraces about everything from picture alphabet to ponderous Chinese classics. I have often wondered how the latter applied to housekeeping and motherhood.

You might think, when a girl has mastered the art of making herself mistress, wife, mother, and hostess all at the same time, to say nothing of having pigeonholed in her memory recipes for an endless variety of dishes with strange ingredients and impossible names, it was time for a breathing spell. Not so. There's the

book-keeping, sewing, and learning to direct many servants.

Flower arrangement takes five years of any young life. With it goes correct standing, which is mostly sitting, precise angle of folded hands, and, above all, soft speaking, with reverent silence emphasized when relations-in-law are near. Otherwise, I'd have you know, the young-bride-to-be is hardly worth the jinrikisha ride that brings her to her parents-in-law's house, or the three cups of wine consumed in making the twain one—and that one the man.

" Suppose the bride is a daughter of the soil? Would the requirements be so very exacting? " I can hear you asking it just that way—and here's my answer: " Suppose she is? Hers is still some job. To the qualities of a good housekeeper she adds those of a good farmer, as she usually works close upon the heels of the man of the house.

With gentle skill she manipulates the stupid ox attached to the crude plough. She helps to sow the seed. She coaxes the crops and follows

the reapers in the harvest. Between times she mothers her children, serves her husband's parents, and takes a moment to breathe a prayer at a wayside shrine. She finds time for it all. Her eight-hour day is multiplied by two.

Long before Fuji's snow-capped dome begins her morning blush, housekeepers of the land are up and doing. Sometimes the home is servantless. Then wife's first duty, after her own quick toilet, is to slide back the wooden doors which enclose four sides of the dwelling. This makes way for the glory of the sun or the beauty of the mist. Her bedding is lifted from the floor to its resting-place behind wall-panels. The night-light is safely removed. She fans the *hibachi* charcoal to a fresh glow and arranges husband's apparel so conveniently near, and with such care, a semi-blind man could array himself without missing a collar-button or a loop.

But listen to the silence with which it is done. There is a reason. The master of the house, "because he is a man," must have his beauty sleep. And you and I and the universal

sisterhood of housekeepers will agree it is most desirable that the " He " arrive at the breakfast-table with temper unruffled. Happily the Danna San's mood is usually in tune with the harmony around him, and the breakfast awaiting him completes the score.

Wise lady she is to have hat, shoes, overcoat, and cane ready to be placed on the " precious person of her honourable husband." She follows him to the gate, and I dare any of his species to be proof against the farewell smile she gives as he goes to his work. Don't get too sorry. It's her life and she lives it cheerfully. It's a sort of comradeship business with duty well done on both sides, and on the average works out with quiet content. Husband and wife may not be radiantly enthusiastic about each other, but it's a different story when it comes to the children.

Of course there are children. There must be, whether begged, borrowed, or adopted. And you just want to get up and hug somebody when you see with what care each small body is made

ready, started schoolward, fresh and happy, carrying in his heart some gentle reminder of duty. Thrice blessed the household when the gracious gods supply it annually with a brand-new baby. If ever the mother is a spendthrift of time, it is when she lingers over her morning's delight of bathing and dressing the latest cherub.

It is the same feeling with which some women pin a bunch of priceless orchids to their belt and hie them forth to a banquet that a Japanese woman ties a little pink- or blue-kimono baby on her back and goes about her household duties.

I'd wager if you told your cook to "go to the Daidoroko" she would give notice.

In Nipponese it stands for kitchen, and in some homes where I have been the food-cooking place is the shiniest spot under the roof. The morning sun streams through the paper windows. It catches up its thousand reflections from pan and brass kettles, making flirty little haloes to float about child and mother as the daily scrubbing and polishing go on. Between rubs the

many picturesque tradesmen appear on the scene —the fish-man, the egg-man, the chicken-dealer, maybe a duck-trader, the vegetable-vendor, and the flower-seller. They come early and linger long with baskets swung from a pole carried across the shoulder; each one declares that nothing grows outside the garden of the gods so rare as the thing he offers. He is so earnest that you are almost convinced that he is telling the truth. This precious bit has been grown especially for madam. Does not the lady see with her own honourable eyes? She is so clever. She is good. Also she is beautiful.

It is a time-consuming ceremony. But, servant or none, it is a skilful game every good housekeeper chooses to play for herself. With keen judgment she selects the fish, mushrooms, and eggs for making of the dinner soup, or buckwheat for the cereal. She chooses the long, slick eel with care. When boiled to a finish and chopped up with rice, the ancient four-and-twenty blackbirds are no more deserving of fame and song than he.

Suppose you ran up against something so nearly a twin to a cake of white soap you'd hesitate whether to put it in the soap-dish or the soup-bowl. That's Tofu. I leave it to you. Wouldn't you like a little early training on the subject?

The old adage, "the way to a man's heart is over his tongue," was no news to Japanese women. They had known it since men were. The first foreign food was to be found in delectable tea-houses, served by irresistible geisha maids. Seeing their mankind fall easy victims to savoury dishes from across the sea, wives and mothers rose as one and met the demands by mastering the strange ways of the invader.

It is a far cry from that day of fun when Kate Jilson, demonstrating biscuit-making before a class of enthusiastic going-to-be housekeepers, requested a baking-pan, and was handed a shiny new dust-pan—to the present time of gas-ranged and highly equipped domestic-science schools which dot the face of the land.

Many a Japanese housewife is now past

mistress in manipulating the preserve-kettle and steak-broiler.

Wouldn't it seem quite enough for one life-time to live up to all this? But there's the sewing of kimonos, big and little, and all the bed-clothes. Both must be hand-made; machines can't do it.

Has she finished? Not yet. To make sure nothing is skipped, the law, unchanged with changing years, steps in and has a word or so to say.

It declares that on a certain date in March and December there shall be an official house-cleaning. On this day every householder in all cities, towns, and villages must dust, sweep, and scrub every part of the premises from lodge gate to goldfish in the garden lake.

Coming along with this proclamation is a courteous but significant little notice. It tells the story of a small brown gentleman, in brass-buttoned uniform, who will call late in the evening to inspect the premises. This is all-sufficient. Everybody who knows the blossom

kingdom knows that the law will get you if you don't look out.

As if by prearranged signal, on the day named every house in the empire empties its contents into the narrow highways of town and city. Possessions rich and poor are laid bare to the public ; and, if every housekeeper had not too many troubles of her own to sum up her neighbours' the tragedies and comedies revealed by these possessions would furnish gossip for all holidays to come.

With the dawn the land begins to resound to the swishing of scrub-brush and broom ; the tattoo of a thousand heavy sticks beating dust from the padded floor mats, adds a vigorous note to the great anthem of national clean-up ! Dust specks are hunted like criminals. Germs are boiled into vapour. Household articles, including the house, are scrutinized and sterilized.

The work complete, the worker refreshes herself in the boiling bath, arrays her body in company kimono, arranges her hair faultlessly,

kneels upon her immaculate mats, and serenely awaits the visiting inspector. He comes, examines, approves, and congratulates, and with his coming those wonderful tones of temple bells boom out over a land fragrant as a flower and spotless—for the time being!

Aren't you glad that for the faithful and untiring there should be a holiday time all their own? There is, and it comes with a festival called "Hari no Kuyu." It means the end, for the time, of needlework and such-like, also the privilege of entertaining in the housekeeper's very own way. For twenty-four hours she is nobody's slave, and directs affairs to suit her own fancy. To her honour be it said, she seizes the opportunity to extend gracious hospitality and gentle courtesy to her neighbours, or the accidental stranger within her city gates. But it isn't hard to see why she walks with lifted chin and an air a bit lofty.

In the old Hermit-Nation days it was no more permissible for the wife to appear at functions, private or public, than it was for her to "sass"

back if her husband grew peevish. Of course she may have spent days and nights foreseeing preparations for the occasion, but when it arrived she "made absence" to the dim recesses of some far-off chamber.

Then comes the rude West a-rushing in where only gods had flitted about. It brought along with it new ideals, new standards, and queer customs.

The shock jolted the gracious lords of the land into a change of heart, and up went the status of women many notches. From an invisible convention-shackled force, she came into her own as comrade and partaker as well as worker and overseer. With something doing almost every minute in the day, the average Japanese housekeeper joins in a mild social life, either with her own special friends or the guests of her husband who are bidden to his feasts. She even manages to get in some hours of recreation.

In her work with the Red Cross she combines joy of merciful service and delightful friendly

intercourse. The all-family theatre parties contribute much to her simple pleasure, and she counts among her blessings the many open-air festivals and excursions in cherry-blossom time.

If home cares grow too tense and threaten her nerves, there is always the unmusical koto on which she can twang her troubles in mournful ditties. And it argues not an indifferent housekeeper, but a superior soul that shines up nagging, common-place duties by painting bits of landscape, or writing a poem as dainty as the paper on which it is penned.

In her love of the beautiful a Japanese woman finds her escape from corroding monotony. No responsibility is too heavy for the natural instinct to find expression.

Maybe it is the way she pounds the rice for the New Year Mochi, into fluffy, puffy cakes; maybe it's the way she moulds the red beans into festive shapes. Perhaps it is in the set of her sash, or the joy-compelling rose in her hair. But, whether maid or matron, princess or bare-

footed field woman, the touch of the artist is inevitable.

A great-souled empress found heart's ease from royal burdens in the beauty of simple rhyme or flower culture.

A lowly woman water-carrier forgot her heavy toil and sang:

> " All round the rope a morning-glory clings.
> How can I break its beauty's dainty spell?
> I beg for water from a neighbour's well! "

There *now*, Mate! How's that for a long letter? I've been at it from breakfast to tiffin, and my fingers are cramped into hooks. Take all the time you like to read it. It will be a long time before you get another.

Karuizawa.

The stage is all set for the arrival of Jack and the caravan. The doors and windows are wide open and every available lamp and candle is lighted. Even the double row of stone lanterns leading down to the road are twinkling a welcome to the coming guests. All the bowls and vases are spilling over with primroses, skilfully arranged by Lotus Blossom's otherwise useless fingers.

This time last week I was not feeling so chipper. The day after I wrote you we had a typhoon which nearly blew me and Lotus Blossom into eternity. It began with an earthquake—just a little nervous chill, you know, that set everything to jingling, and swung all the pictures out from the walls. Then came torrents of rain, and a wind that played ten pins with the trees, and jacks with the houses. Reports are still coming in of deaths in the valley, but our little house stood the test beautifully

and, beyond a shake or two and a leak or so, nothing happened. We would have been foodless had not the baker, the grocer, and all the tradesmen braved the wind and come to the house. I do not know how they stood up under the wind, but I had a cup of hot tea ready for them and made them stay and rest. The little kitchen was so full there wasn't room to turn around, but I tell you I was thankful to them, for the wind would have blown us into the next county if we had attempted to go out.

In spite of the storm it has been a busy week. This morning I went down to the village to do my last shopping before my large family arrives. In all the world there is no quainter spot than this Light Swamp Village which lies peacefully unafraid under the very wing of that sinister old volcano. It looks exactly like an old-time print, with its open-faced shops, its high lacquer bridge, and its groups of men and women coming down from the mountains bearing tremendous loads of fuel, with their kimonos tucked high, and their heads bound about with bright blue

and white kerchiefs. This morning they were chanting a weird old song that had probably been sung in these mountains for centuries.

When I got to the market, which was a riot of colour, I was taken in charge by a very young and cock-sure clerk, who with the wisdom of Solomon directed my purchases. I bought turnips by the yard, because they grow that way, okra by the pod because it scarcely grows at all, beans by the string, eight beans to a string, and—would you believe it?—chicken by the piece! An aspiring purchaser can buy all wings, an athletic one all legs, etc.

Did it ever occur to you that carrying your own packages was a disgrace? Well, it's so in this part of the country, and in spite of my protests Lotus Blossom and I started up the mountain trail homeward bound with six small boys trailing along behind all carrying a parcel. When I asked why so many had to come, Lotus Blossom said it was because the wise man of the village had said that foreigners with light hair were descended from lions, and that all

the small boys wanted to look at me. I roared once or twice just to live up to my ancestors, and the joke was highly appreciated.

When I reached home a strangely familiar figure was lying in the long steamer chair on the verandah and a joyous voice sang out:

"Ship ahoy! Mamma San!"

I had fully made up my mind I was *not* going to be friendly with that scapegrace Austin Kentwood. Kate was furious with him, Jack thought he had acted abominably, Perry was ready to punch his head. But when he stood there flashing his white teeth at me and holding out both hands, I couldn't turn him down.

"Where on earth did you come from?" I demanded.

"Same place I'm going—nowhere."

"But where have you been since you left Tokyo? How did you know I was here?"

"Heard your name mentioned down at the hotel. Are you glad to see me?"

It was no use saying I wasn't, for I was, and he knew it.

" I've come to dinner," he announced.

" But you can't stay. Jack is coming with a party on the evening train. There won't be room for you."

" A party ? " he asked hopefully. " Not the Boss Lady Mish ? "

" No." I laughed at his wry face. " It's the Spencers from China."

He was all interest.

" Have they come ? What are they like ? "

" Well, there are two girls and an Amah."

" Did I win my bet ? How old are they ? "

" Well, I should say the Amah was about sixty."

He flicked me lightly on the wrist with his glove.

" Come, Mamma San, out with it ; are they pretty ? "

" It's none of your business," I said severely. " I came up here for rest and quiet, and I am not going to have any wandering Romeo prowling about the premises."

" I won't prowl. I'll sit perfectly still and

not stir a feather. It's been beastly lonesome playing around by myself. You aren't going to turn me out, are you ? "

I thought of Hilda Spencer and trembled.

" The girls won't interest you, Austin," I said. " One of them is a youngster of ten, and the other isn't your type."

" What type is she ? "

" More Perry Bickford's. She's quiet and indifferent, and very gentle and conscientious."

" Pretty ? "

" Well—yes," I had to admit.

Austin pondered the question a moment, then he got up and stretched lazily :

" Well, if I can't flirt with her, I can flirt a little with you, can't I ? "

" You can *not.* I stopped flirting fifteen years ago."

Whereupon he said something impudent and disrespectful, about my flirting with St. Peter when I got to heaven, and I ran him off the premises, and told him not to dare to come back until he was invited.

I see a string of jinrikisha lights down in the valley, and my thumping heart tells me who is coming. I wonder how many old married ladies get palpitation when they see their husbands coming? Austin may be right. I probably have frivolled a little on my way from the cradle to the grave, but there has never been but one person in the world who could start a whole symphony orchestra in my soul by simply turning the corner!

Karuizawa,
July, 1920.

Two whole weeks have rushed by filled with such a variety of happenings that I scarcely know where to begin. I find the only way to get an hour to myself is to snip it off Time's forelock or pig-tail. To-day it's the former. I determined to get ahead of a very full day by starting as soon as it did. In a gay kimono, and my night "*hat*eru"—as Lotus Blossom calls my boudoir cap—I am sitting out on my two-foot bedroom balcony, trying to get a letter written to you before breakfast.

In this early morning light, with the sun rising through the mists, and everything cool and sparkly, it's too beautiful for words to describe. I feel as if I were sitting in the middle of a soft white cloud encircled by a rainbow. Somewhere below me an inquisitive bird keeps calling, "Who are *you*? Who are *you*? Who are

you?" and from over the hill comes the pert answer, "Lulie *Lu*! Lulie *Lu*! Lulie *Lu*!"

Since my last letter to you not only my own house, but the village as well, has begun to swarm like a beehive. This is quite a popular resort for missionaries and tourists, and already the path up the mountain is becoming worn smooth by the coming and going of gay young feet. There are teas and dances and tennis at the hotel, picnics on the mountain, and various mild diversions.

You can imagine my utter surprise, when Jack and his party arrived, to see Perry Bickford among those present. As soon as I could get Jack off to myself in the tea pavilion under the wisteria vine, I demanded to know what it meant. He looked rather sheepish, and hastened to explain that Perry had been working too hard and was having trouble with his throat; that they had had a long talk and Perry had made him a solemn promise that if he be allowed to come up here for his holiday, he wouldn't speak

a word of love to Hilda until her father arrived in August.

Can you beat that for worldly wisdom on the part of my astute husband? Dan Cupid has as little need for speech as he has for eyesight, and he is doing a brisk business at his old stand fourteen hours out of every twenty-four.

At least he was until yesterday, then he had some arrow trouble. I am afraid some of his darts got bent and hit a mark he didn't intend.

Perry and Hilda came back from a walk and Austin Kentwood was walking between them. I hadn't seen him for a week, and I was fervently praying that he had got out of the neighbourhood; but here he was, debonair and nonchalant as ever, and bestowing glances upon Hilda that were warm enough to melt the hardest Ice Maiden.

"Why didn't you *tell* me what a peach she was?" he demanded later when he cornered me in the garden. "I never saw a girl with such damn gorgeous lamps in my life! When she turns them on me in that cool, detached,

don't-give-a-kitty sort of a way, I get all balled up. Honest, she's got me going something fierce ! "

" Now, Austin Kentwood," I said, with all the dignity I could assume, " you get that out of your system at once. Hilda is as good as engaged to Perry Bickford, and they are only waiting for her father to come before it's settled."

" Engaged ? Nonsense ! Why, Mamma San, she isn't in love with anybody—yet. That little girl is sound asleep, but if I've got anything to do with it she'll begin to hear the birds sing soon."

In vain I pleaded with him, and even threatened to turn the matter over to Jack.

" Better keep your own hand on the steering-wheel," he warned ; " this little car is used to being run by a lady. But, honest, I'll play fair ! I'll accept the same handicap Bickford has : I promise not to make love to her until her father comes. That is, if you don't forbid me the house. If you do —— "

I hastily compromised. The thought of Austin

in the neighbourhood, and under no restrictions, was too terrifying to contemplate.

I decided to warn Hilda, but it seems Mrs. Fong Tu had anticipated me. From the moment she caught sight of him she bristled like an old hen when a hawk is overhead.

"Him no good," she told me. "Me sabe. Him one time Pekin way. No nice boy."

Whatever Hilda thought she kept it to herself. She is one of those non-resisting people who inherit the earth. She never goes after anything, and yet everything is poured into her lap. She is sublimely indifferent to her looks, and yet she is built like Venus. She never seems to make the least effort to attract people, yet old and young adore her. She makes me think of those lines:

"The innocent moon, that nothing does but shines,
Moves all the slumbering surges of the world."

From this time on I suppose old Fong Tu will be sitting on her job, like a heaven dog on a temple roof. That is, when she isn't chasing

Limmie. If that child doesn't land us all in the police station I shall be grateful. The only thing that will save us is that she is hand-in-glove with every policeman in the district. Some of the neighbours, however, are not so easy to handle. One, in particular, is suffering from nerves and sanctification. He doesn't approve of joy and merriment, and he looks upon youth with deep suspicion. It was a sad, drab hour for him when he first crossed swords with Limmie. She has played enough pranks on him to change his circulation, if not his point of view, and nothing we can say or do can stop her. One day he got mad at a gardener and flew into a terrible rage at him right in front of our house. In a moment that Imp was at the piano singing at the top of her shrill young voice:

"Oh! give—a—him—a hell. Oh—give—a—him—a hell. Oh! give—a—him—a helping hand!"

We could manage her better if she weren't so outrageously funny. She looks like a Kewpie, and you know you couldn't spank a Kewpie!

Jack spoils the life out of her; he scolds her and then tells her stories about pirates and lost treasures, and she follows him about like a dog.

Fortunately the Pine Knot that Jack brought up from Tokyo has proven a treasure. She isn't much to look at, resembling a small dried persimmon, but her middle name is Efficiency. In twenty-four hours she had laid in a supply of provisions for the summer, performed a surgical operation on the cooking-stove, whacked the bathing apparatus into shape, put Lotus Blossom to work, and banished me from the kitchen.

As I write this I see her toiling up the path with her hands full of wild orchids. She has been down the mountain-side to get them in all their morning freshness to grace our breakfast table.

So I bid you "O ha yo," which means good morning, as I go to don my armour for the coming day.

Karuizawa,

August 7.

From the way things look I imagine we are approaching the critical third act of our comedy! The suspense is something terrible. Don't talk to me about your Madonna-like girls! They can do more damage than half a dozen hoydens such as I used to be. Why, Hilda Spencer has got these two men so crazy about her that they don't know whether they are walking upright or on all-fours! The funny part of it is that none of us can decide which one she prefers. When she is with Perry she is silent and preoccupied, and when she is with Austin she is gay and lively. She divides her time between the two, and plays no favourites.

Of course the two swains *loathe* each other, and privately Austin never misses an opportunity to remind Perry of the wager he has won. Perry's dislike takes the form of superior indiffer-

ence, while Austin's finds vent in making fun of his over-serious rival. He calls him "The World's Almanac," and he teases him outrageously.

This morning we went out to a silkworm farm, and if Jack hadn't at the last minute let Limmie take the monkey, we would have had a wonderful time.

When we entered the long grey sheds I could see through the dusky interiors tier upon tier of shallow baskets lined with soft green, and, standing near, many workers silent and very watchful. Never have I seen so much attention bestowed upon any crawling thing. Of all the spoiled darlings these creatures are the worst. There were tens of thousands of the silver-white bodies wriggling over the shredded mulberry leaves covering the bottom of the trays. And, as far as I could see, each wriggler required the personal attention of a special nurse. They got it too, night and day, from the girl or woman watcher. The life of a silkworm is brief, but pampered. Exclusive, too. No human must go

too close to them. They dislike to be breathed upon.

Just one whiff of tainted air and the casualty list is long. And, while they can stow away tons of mulberry leaves, the food must be specially prepared from the richest and ripest parts of the plants. They must be neither hot nor cold—just right; and so anxious and careful were the attendants I should not have been surprised to see ear-muffs and sweaters all ready to be clapped on their silky highnesses should a left-over cool spell come sweeping over the hills.

After thirty-three days of gorging interspersed with many long hours of beauty sleep the indulged creatures are tenderly laid on a soft mat to which bent straws are fastened. Something tells them it is about time they were going to work. Climbing the straws to the highest point, they begin to give forth a glowing thread of amber hue which they wind about them as a cloak. Then the grand time ends in a boiling bath, and the end of the glistening thread is caught by waiting fingers and wound into great

golden hanks. These find their way to the farthermost parts of the world, and back again comes a stream of yellow coin—a rich reward for a month's board and keep. One can write about it light-mindedly, but it is a serious, gigantic business, and I wonder to what the numberless women and girl cocoon nurses would turn if some upstart of a genius should invent a mechanical silkworm!

And now for the disaster! While we were hanging breathless with interest over the trays, didn't that infernal monkey elect to make a flying dash out of Limmie's arms and land slap-dash in the middle of things! Silkworms, mulberry leaves, bent straws, and threads of amber filled the air. I never was so mortified! Not even the cheque which Jack insisted upon giving the manager could make amends for the damage done.

I shouldn't be surprised if that monkey was found dead in bed some morning.

For the past week Asama Yama has evidently

been suffering with a stomach-ache. Such groanings and moanings! By day a big volume of white smoke waves across the sky like a giant willow plume.

Parties are formed every day in the village, to make the ascent for a close-up view of the fiery monster, and everyone comes down enthusiastic over the awful sublimity of the scene.

Austin and I are wild to go, and even Hilda wants to try it. But Jack and Perry object. However, I think we will win them over yet.

Last night Hilda and Perry and Jack and I went for a walk. The night was straight from Paradise—indeed, that much-vaulted place would have trouble in producing anything more magical than the picture Mother Earth flung on the screen for the benefit of a couple of lovers, old and young. In the east a gorgeous full moon was laying a sheen of silver over hill and dale, and in the west the volcano was sending forth a column of crimson smoke against the indigo sky. There is a flower which grows here called the "Looking-at-the-Moon-Flower." It only

opens when the moon shines, and last night its yellow petals carpeted the ground like a cloth of gold.

Perry did not have to do any wooing. The moonlight and the wind in the cryptomerias, the sound of falling water, and all the whispering night sounds did it for him. In spite of his state of mind I believe he is living up to his promise to Jack with absolute fidelity.

I wish I could say the same for Austin. He may not be *saying* pretty things to Hilda, but every time he looks at her he looks a sonnet, and his very voice is a caress. Then he makes her laugh. That is something nobody else ever seems to do. I would as soon think of an Easter lily laughing as Hilda. But since she came up here her big, dreamy eyes follow Austin about with amused interest, and every now and then she gives him a little trill of laughter that is like the rippling of water over pebbles in a brook.

I don't blame the boys for being in love with her, and I shouldn't in the least blame her

for being in love with Austin. I couldn't be in love with Perry. He has such terrifically high standards, and lives up to them so heroically, that I should get perfectly exhausted trying to be worthy of him. It is all a matter of comparison.

Some men make a woman conscious of her cloven feet, and others make her feel her wings sprouting. Alongside of Austin I am a saint, but compared to Perry Bickford I am a miserable worldling.

As to Hilda's own feelings we are all guessing. She takes no one into her confidence, but you may be sure there is a lot of thinking going on in that shapely little head. She distributes her favours impartially, and the closest observer can detect no partiality. Jack and Mrs. Fong Tu are silently pulling for Perry, while I—shall I confess my sin? For the life of me I can't help rooting a bit for the Black Sheep. I have such a feeling of kinship for that black sheep! I haven't exactly been one, but I've been a grey lamb, and I would probably have grown into a B. S. but for you and Jack.

Perhaps if Austin had a good angel like Hilda to guide him he might pass his exams. for Paradise. However, I swear to keep my hands off the situation. Or rather Jack will keep them off for me, if he has to hold them. He cannot for the life of him see why women are so foolish about Austin. Just between us I think he is suffering from a touch of what Pine Knot calls "J. Lucy." He would let me adopt ten little girls if I wanted to, but one little boy in the family might cause a divorce.

He needn't worry! I have had enough family to last me the rest of my days. One more month and I shall turn my charges over to their father. Then I shall kidnap Jack and flee to the remotest spot I can find, where we shall have

> "Peace, perfect peace,
> With loved ones far away!"

Long as this letter is I'm obliged to add a triumphant shout to it. Perry has paid his debt, and the fun of it has sent us all into hysterics.

This afternoon that solemn young person came stalking into the verandah, firmly grasping by the hand the blackest, kinkiest-headed, fattest little darky you ever beheld.

" Here's your stake, Kentwood," said Perry, with an actual twinkle in his eyes.

Astounded is a feeble word to express our feelings at seeing a genuine, all wool and a yard-wide African in the heart of Japan.

" Where did you belong ? " I asked the little fellow.

" I b'longs to my Mammy," he said in accents dear to my southern heart.

" But what is she doing over here in Japan ? "

" Her's nursin' Miss Sue's baby. Marse Charlie is a army Captain."

" Oh ! it's the Wilsons over across the river," explained Jack.

Then we gave the youngster an orange and some cookies and Perry slipped a coin in his pocket, and Pine Knot was sent down the hill with him to see that he reached home in safety.

Karuizawa,
August 14.

How I wish you could be with me to-day! Such lights and shadows on the blue mountains, five ranges of which I can see from the verandah. Asama Yama is gorgeous. Looks close enough for me to touch its velvet slopes thirteen miles away. The wild grasses are mostly topped with coppery plumes, and the primroses are still in profusion.

Yesterday I thought Hilda needed a rest from her lovers—they are nearly wearing the child out!—and I proposed to her that we should run away for an all-day spree and not tell anyone where we were going. I am glad I did, not only because we had lots of amusing experiences, but because I saw a side of her I had never seen before. When you get her by herself out-of-doors, she opens up like the moon flower. Such common sense, such poise, such natural sweetness! I came home almost as much in love with her as the boys are.

We started forth about ten o'clock, and as we passed through the village I stopped before a little curio shop and said:

"Let's take a squint in here!"

The proprietor was standing in the door, and he said indignantly, in fairly good English:

"Madam, we keep no squints in here."

Well, that started us off in high spirits, and we kept them all day. We struck out into the country with no definite goal in sight, but before long we came to a halt. In a huge field below us were hundreds of women, young and old, with blue kimonos jauntily tucked up, heads wrapped about with blue and white towels, picking tea leaves. You never saw such speed and dexterity! Their fingers fairly flew, choosing the leaves with quick decision and dropping them into their baskets. Only a certain leaf has a market value, and on the quality of the leaf selected depends the amount of the woman's pay. Think of it, Mate! Millions of pounds of tea, each pound with its uncounted million

leaves, each leaf picked by the fingers of a woman! Is it any wonder the Orient has glorified tea in poetry and rhyme? Only, why not hang the glory on the woman instead of on the tea?

The pickers were as jolly a crew as one could wish to see. Instead of quieting down as we appeared, Hilda and I seemed to add much to the hilarity of the crowd. But not a hand stopped its work, not a head ceased its bobbing. Between bobs many a side glance came our way. They made a merry jest of our clothes; our hats sent them into peals of laughter. And one youngster seeing Hilda's one-piece dress, daringly asked that she take it off that they might see how she got into it! It was all so friendly. The simple interest of women in some of their unknown kind.

Lunch-time came, and they crowded around us with curiosity. Some of them had never been close to a foreign woman before and their interest was intense.

Hilda took off her hat and passed it around

for inspection. Their comments in Japanese were killing.

" It is a seed basket," said one.

" No, no, a hen nest," said another, turning it upside down.

" Why does the neisan cover her head? She is not bald? " asked a third, with a wondering look at Hilda's mass of shining hair.

Then a true daughter of Eve solved the problem:

" Plaited straw and bird wing cover the head to make the lady pretty, eh? "

You have never seen anything dearer than the way Hilda entertained those women. After she had almost undressed herself to satisfy their curiosity, I asked her if she would mind dancing for them.

With absolute lack of self-consciousness that lithe young naiad swayed and swung to the music of her own voice, while the tea-pickers stood spell-bound with admiration.

When we left they were hard at work again, but every face smiled a farewell, and even after

we turned the bend in the road we could hear them calling good-bye.

Coming home Hilda talked to me quite freely about her love affairs. She honestly doesn't know her own mind. She said quite naively:

"When I am with them both I think it is Austin, but when I am away from them both I think it is Perry."

"Then you aren't in love with either one of them!" I said emphatically. "When you really get a cinder in your eye you are mighty apt to know *which* eye it is in."

She smiled at that and said, "Y-e-s, but can't you get a cinder in each eye at the same time?"

You see the girl had never come in contact with young men in her life until she came here; and instead of doing the natural thing and having her love affairs in sequence, she is evidently having them at the same time.

She is very much troubled and perturbed over the situation, but the more she tries to come to a decision the more uncertain she becomes. One word in favour of either suitor

and she would rush to the defence of the other. I have tried to make this point clear to Jack and Mrs. Fong Tu, but they *will* scowl at Austin in spite of all I can do or say. If he gets her it will be their fault and not mine.

If the fires from Asama Yama continue to diminish, we are going to make the ascent next week. Jack refuses positively to go on account of the heat. Perry isn't keen about it, but he would go through Hades rather than have Austin and Hilda go without him. The rest of us are wild for the experience. Wasn't it cute of that old volcano to up and operate for our benefit? Sometimes a year passes without its showing the faintest sign of life, then it gets busy, and fortunate indeed are those who are on hand for the exhibition.

Karuizawa,

August 20.

Dearest Friend:

I don't know whether I can give you a coherent account of what has happened or not. I have been through the most horrible experience I've ever known, and my hand still shakes so that I can scarcely control the pen.

You know I wrote you that we were planning to go up Asama Yama. Well, last week everything seemed propitious. Hundreds of tourists and natives had dared the ashy heights, and all had come down wildly enthusiastic over the terrific beauty of the summit. After some persuasion Jack consented for us to go, and Perry and Austin forgot their differences for once and went forth together to make arrangements for horses and a guide. There is a dinky little train that takes you up, but we preferred

going horseback. We fixed up a big hamper of food, as we had to do our climbing by night, the heat being too intense in the daytime.

Our guide was a splendid young fellow named Somi, whom Perry had been helping with his English. He was trying for a degree in the Imperial University and was acting as guide to help him out. Poor fellow, it makes me sick at heart to think about him!

We started promptly at sundown, a coolie leading each horse, and a fifth charger bringing up the rear with the provisions. Just as we were starting Jack called out:

"Be careful, Somi! Bring them back safely!"

And Somi, young and straight, in his guide's costume of white and blue, called back confidently:

"They no come back safe, I no come back at all!"

I noticed as we passed through the village that there was a strange lack of good-byes and good wishes that usually follow departing parties.

One old man came out and spoke earnestly to Somi in Japanese.

" Him say no go," said Somi, with a long face.

" Nonsense ! " cried Austin. " Why not ? "

" No like him looks," said Somi, pointing to Asama Yama. " Old man very wise."

" Why, the mountain hasn't been as quiet as this for a month ! " argued Austin. " Of course we are going."

Perry alone hesitated. He wanted to make further inquiry and investigate the matter.

" If you are nervous, don't go," said Austin. " Somi and I will take care of the ladies."

Perry gave him one withering look and then said Hilda and I should decide it. We both were strong for going on, so our cavalcade proceeded.

As soon as our horses began to climb we forgot everything in the beauty around us. The trail took us in and out, up and down, around velvety green mountains ; past tiny hamlets and quiet farm-houses. The splendour of the

sunset, the afterglow of ethereal loveliness, and the coming of the stars painted for all of us a never-to-be-forgotten picture. It grew dark quickly, and once I turned and, looking back, saw the twinkling lights of the village, so dim and far away they seemed only tiny reflections of stars in a deep and distant pool. Below us the blue-black shadows of mysterious mountain valleys, above us a million shining stars, and before us always and at every turn those leaping tongues of flame which led us onward like a giant pillar of fire.

Austin, Hilda, and I rode ahead, and never have I seen any one so utterly beguiling as Austin. He kept us in a gale of merriment the whole time, and Hilda apparently had eyes and ears for no one else. Perry in a black mood rode behind with Somi. He is a worthy person, thought I, but not built for a picnic, and I left him to sulk, as I supposed, in the rear, little dreaming of the grave anxiety he was sharing with Somi.

At last we came to our halting-place, farther

than which no four-legged beast can go, and after a short rest we were to start on our long climb. You see it had taken us most of the night to come this far, and half the wonder of the trip would be lost if we failed to reach the summit before sunrise.

Tightening our belts and sandals and listening carefully to Somi's instructions, we began the climb. At first it was not so bad, but gradually it got steeper and steeper, and the ashes covered our ankles and then came half-way to our knees. It was two steps up and one down, and it took the combined efforts of the men to get Hilda and me to the top. But at last we arrived, breathless and almost exhausted with the heat.

" Look ! We are come ! " cried Somi.

I stepped to the edge of the crater, gave one glance, then covered my face with my hands.

Looking down into that seething mass of boiling lava hundreds of feet below was like looking straight into the mouth of hell ! A

high wind was blowing the fire and smoke away from us, and the only discomfort we suffered was from the heat of the ashes.

Somi spread out our rugs, and Hilda and Perry and I prepared the lunch. Just as we were finishing it dawn came, and heaven itself can offer nothing more exquisite. We were all held enthralled by the most sublimely beautiful and awful spectacle we now witnessed. Then all of a sudden the wind died. There was a ghastly silence as if the heart of the world had stopped beating—then without warning came a roar that seemed to split the earth asunder !

For a moment I knew nothing, then I opened my eyes and saw Somi's figure silhouetted against a column of fire.

" Run ! " he shrieked, with arms outstretched as if to ward the danger from us. " Run ! " And he seized my wrist and dragged me down the mountain while the stones and lava fell about us like rain. I was conscious that Perry and Hilda were close behind us, but I could not see Austin anywhere.

We had gone only a short way when the roar began, and Somi hurried us toward the only shelter in sight; it was a crevice in the rock, very shallow but deep enough for two or three. As he pushed Hilda and me toward it I saw that Austin was already there, cowering against the wall, his face as grey as the granite. Blistered by the heat, blinded by the smoke, and stunned by the explosion, we three cowered under the ledge, while Perry and Somi stood outside facing death. We hadn't long to wait. Once again came that awful roar, and the rain of hot and fiery boulders. I heard a groan and a scream, then I saw Perry, with the blood streaming from his head, bending over the prostrate figure of Somi.

The guide lay in a bed of hot ashes, and across his thighs lay an enormous boulder. It took us all to lift it, and when we at last succeeded it was to find poor Somi so seriously injured that we dared not move him. He realized his condition, and the look in his eyes will haunt me for ever.

"Perry San!" he whispered, "take them down. Much danger. No must stay."

"But how do we get down?" demanded Austin eagerly. "Which way do we go?"

Somi between gasps of pain gave directions.

"I am not going," said Perry; "the rest of you start on."

Hilda and I both protested that he was injured and must get a doctor as soon as possible.

"It's just a scratch," said Perry, impatiently wiping the blood from his eyes.

But I insisted on Austin looking at it while I tore my petticoat into strips for a bandage.

"It's just a nasty scratch," repeated Austin, after a hasty examination; "a little cut can make a lot of blood."

Perry was impatient for us to be off.

"Don't wait another minute," he urged; "keep to the path and you will be out of the danger zone. As soon as you get to the horses send two of the coolies back for us. You go on

to the village for help. Get a doctor up here for Somi as soon as you can."

"Yes, yes," said Austin, seizing Hilda's arm. "We will send somebody—don't you worry, old chap."

Hilda stood stock still, looking from one man to the other, and I, watching her, seemed to see her very soul being born. With a little cry she snatched her arm from Austin's hand and ran over to where Perry was bending over Somi.

"I can't leave you, Perry!" she cried. "I am going to stay too!"

For one bewildered moment Perry looked at her.

"Hilda?" he faltered.

Without a moment's hesitation she put her arms around him and clung to his shoulder.

If ever you have seen the light of heaven break through a man's eyes, you will know how Perry looked. There in the very face of death they held each other close. Then he kissed her and drew her to her feet.

"Now," he said firmly, "you must go. There's not a moment to be lost."

Hilda and I still hesitated, but Perry was adamant.

As I turned for a last look my heart failed me. The two injured men looked so helpless and exposed that I could not bear to leave them.

"We are all right!" called Perry reassuringly, and that poor mangled Somi feebly raised one hand, and gasped out: "Yamato Damashi," which from of old has expressed the undying spirit of Japan.

I put my arm around Hilda and drew her away, while the tears streamed down our faces so we could scarcely see. By this time the sun was beginning to blaze, and the ashes burned through the soles of our shoes. Ominous mutterings came from the crater, but there were no further eruptions. Stumbling and slipping, we made our way down the almost obliterated path. Once Hilda stumbled and fell, but when Austin started to help her up she shrank away from him. In

fact we were both so disgusted with him we could scarcely be civil. A woman can forgive almost anything in a man but cowardice ; and when we saw that big, handsome young animal so anxious to save his own skin, we were ready to kill him.

When we got down to the edge of the woods we found the horses, but no coolies. I can't blame them for deserting under such fire. All we could do was to press on as fast as we could toward the village. Before we got there we met Jack, almost crazy with anxiety, coming up with a relief party. As soon as they heard of the accident they hurried on to Perry's assistance, but it was eight hours from the time we left the summit to the time they got there. When they did they found poor Somi dead, and Perry lying in the crevice unconscious from the loss of blood. Jack had to take twelve stitches in what Austin had diagnosed as "a scratch," before Perry could be moved. He is still in bed running a temperature. Jack wants to get him down to Tokyo as soon as he is able to

travel. We are all eager to go, for poor Somi's death hangs over us like a hideous pall. Besides, Burney Spencer gets here on the 26th and I want to turn the girls over to him as soon as possible.

Tokyo,
August 28.

Once more I am in Kate Jilson's little house that swings over the water like a bird on a limb. The horror of those last days at Karuizawa is fast being forgotten in the radiant serenity of Kate's presence. She won't let us think about the accident, much less talk about it. But she has helped Jack to make arrangements for Somi's family that will keep them comfortable for some years to come.

Burney Spencer's ship got in Sunday, and he took Limmie and Mrs. Fong Tu up to the hotel and left Hilda with us. She and I had a lot of shopping to do, and besides I wanted her with me for the week before they return to China. " With me " sounds like a joke, considering the fact that I see her only at meal-times and when we are in the shops. She and Perry, having made their peace with papa, are together every minute that he can spare from the office.